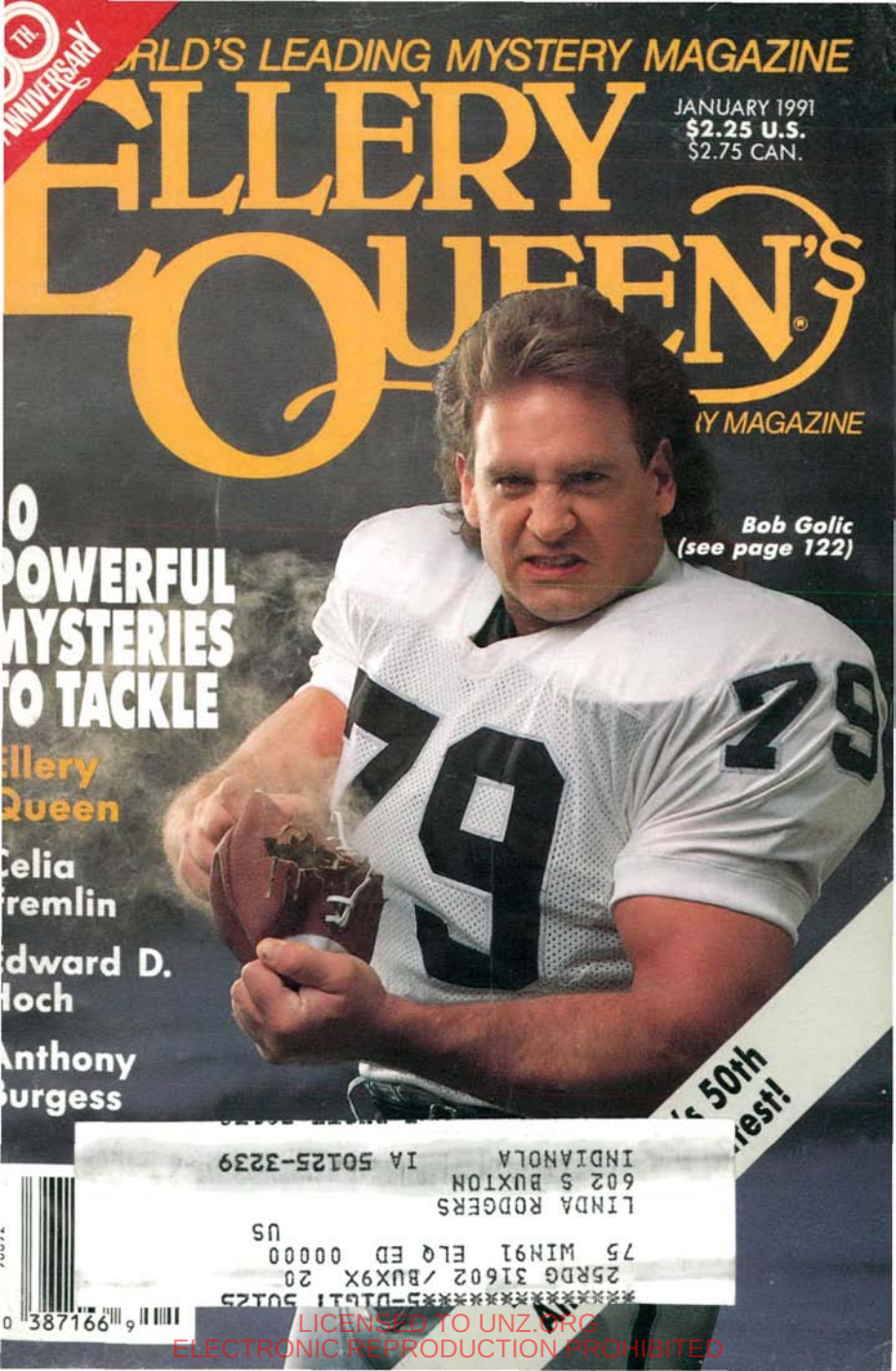

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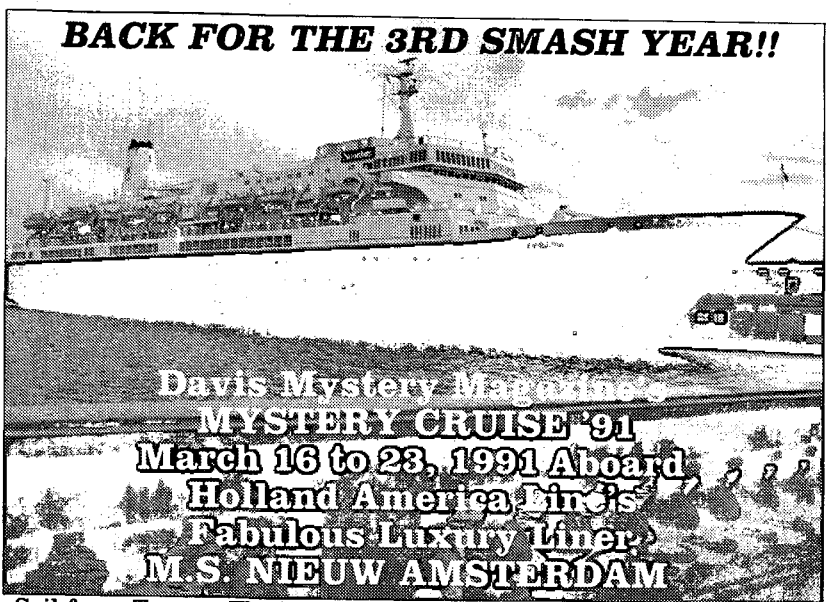

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ISSUE #578—DEDICATED TO LAWRENCE SPIVAK

As Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine *enters its fifty-first year of publication, this first issue contains, among other special features, Ellery Queen's original Introduction as it appeared in Issue #1 (which follows), a reprint of an Ellery Queen short story that last appeared in the magazine in February 1968 (see page 7), the beginning of our 50th Anniversary Contest, a contest that could conceivably give long-time readers an edge over new readers but should be an interesting experience for all (see page 34), and the reprint of the first first-prize-winning story in EQMM's famous story contests. The contests were held for thirteen years, and in each of this year's thirteen issues we will reprint one of the winning stories. The first one, "A Star for a Warrior" by Manly Wade Wellman, which won the first contest in 1946, appears on pages 84–100.*

EDITOR ELLERY QUEEN EXPLAINS

WHY—WHO—HOW—WHEN

WHY

As writers, readers, and collectors of detective-crime stories, we have for many years shouted the need for—and deplored the lack of—a quality publication devoted exclusively to the printing of the best in detective-crime short-story literature.

To this end we have for a long time been building an exhaustive and unique library. So we have at our fingertips a store of the very choicest detective-crime short stories, culled from every conceivable source—books, slick-paper magazines, and "pulp" magazines.

Mr. Lawrence E. Spivak, publisher of *The American Mercury*, believes as we do that mystery enthusiasts are eagerly awaiting a publication devoted to all types of detective-crime stories in which

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consistently good writing would be as important as original ideas, excitement, and craftsmanship.

And so, Ellery Queen is editing and Lawrence E. Spivak is publishing this volume, which is planned as the first of *a periodic anthology of detective-crime short stories*, in which the sole editorial criterion will be quality.

WHO

A "big name" does not always guarantee a good story—the big-name writers themselves are the first to admit this.

On the other hand, some of the finest stories have been and are now being written by lesser-known writers or, in many cases, writers not known to the general public at all.

We propose to give you stories by big-name writers, by lesser-known writers, and by unknown writers. But no matter what their source, they will be superior stories.

Some will be bought from manuscript. Others will be reprinted from published books, old and new, selected from the Ellery Queen library of short detective fiction, which is the largest in America. Still others will be reprinted from magazines, old, recent, and new, "slicks" and "pulps," making our volume in effect a readers' digest in anthological form of detective-crime stories.

In this first volume, you will find a wide variety of detective-story types, each one rating a high editorial mark for excellence and quality and readability in the measured opinion of an Editor who has made a life study of this form of entertainment fiction, each one a genuine adventure-in-reading.

For example: two realistic stories of the hard-boiled school—"Too Many Have Lived," by *Dashiell Hammett*; and "Dime a Dance," by *Cornell Woolrich*—exciting, fast, two-fisted, modern, and superb examples of this kind of purely American writing.

An excellent story of the modern English school—"The Question Mark," by *Margery Allingham*—suave, expert, and completely charming.

The straightforward modern American school—"About the Perfect Crime of Mr. Digberry," by *Anthony Abbot*; "Treasure Hunt," by *Ellery Queen*; and "The Cablegram," by *T. S. Stribling* (much better known as the Pulitzer Prize winner!)—in which the detectives rely more on their brains than on their brawn, and ingenuity of story is the main thing.

And, for sheerest contrast, *Frederick Hazlitt Brennan*'s hillbilly

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yarn, "Wild Onions," which fuses elements rarely amalgamated in a mystery story—humor, native dialect, and murder; the whole making a hilarious tale and a unique item in any enthusiast's collection.

HOW

We are publishing a book rather than a magazine, but since it is to be distributed through a magazine outlet at a magazine price, and since the name rolls easily off the tongue, we have for the present decided to call it *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. It uses not pulp paper nor slick paper, but book paper, which takes printer's ink better, makes for greater legibility, and has a more lasting quality of permanence. Its cover has a modern book-jacket illustration. Unlike a novel, however, it is not bulky: it is compact and in the convenient pocket size.

It is deliberately designed so that he may read who runs as well as he who likes to curl up in bed; and it has the important further consideration of visual attractiveness, so that you will want to preserve your copies of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in the library of your home as you preserve your books.

WHEN

This first issue is frankly experimental. Our belief that a large public exists which impatiently awaits such publication can only be confirmed by that public.

For the present therefore we plan to publish *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* quarterly: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Our ultimate purpose is to publish a new volume each month. That, however, depends upon the reception accorded this and future volumes. The more wholehearted and widespread your response, the more quickly regular monthly publication will be scheduled.

ELLERY QUEEN

Ed. Note: Only five years later, in 1946, EQMM achieved monthly publication.

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THE ADVENTURE OF THE INNER CIRCLE

by ELLERY QUEEN

If you are an Eastern alumnus who has not been to New York since last year's All-University Dinner, you'll be astounded to learn that the famous pickled-pine door directly opposite the elevators on the thirteenth floor of your Alumni Club in Murray Hill is now inscribed: LINEN ROOM.

Visit the Alumni Club on your next trip to Manhattan and see for yourself. On the door now consigned to napery, in the area where the stainless-steel medallion of Janus glistened for so long, you will detect a ghostly circumference some nine inches in diameter—all that is left of The Januarians. Your first thought will of course be that they have removed to more splendid quarters. Undeceive yourself. You may search from cellar to sundeck and you will find no crumb's trace of either Janus or his disciples.

Hasten to the steward for an explanation and he will give you one as plausible as it will be false.

And you will do no better elsewhere.

The fact is, only a very few share the secret of The Januarians' obliteration, and these have taken a vow of silence. And why? Because Eastern is a young—a very young—temple of learning, and there are calamities only age can weather. There is more to it even than that. The cataclysm of events struck at the handiwork of the architects themselves, that legendary band who built the tabernacle and created the holy canons. So Eastern's shame is kept steadfastly covered with silence—and if we uncover its bloody stones here, it is only because the very first word on the great seal of Eastern University itself is: *Veritas*.

To a Harvard man, Harvard '13 means little more than Harvard '06 or Harvard '79, unless Harvard '13 happens to be his own graduating class. But to an Eastern man, of whatever vintage, Eastern '13 is *sui generis*. Their names bite deep into the strong marble of

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the Alumni Club lobby. A member of the class is traditionally the Honorable Mr. Honorary President of the Eastern Alumni Association. To the last man, they carry gold, lifetime, noncancelable passes to Eastern football games. At the All-University Dinner, Eastern '13 shares the Chancellor's parsley-decked table. The twined-elbow Rite of the Original Libation, drunk in foaming beer (the second most sacred canon), is dedicated to that class and no other.

One may well ask why this exaltation of Eastern '13 as against, for example, Eastern '12, or Eastern '98? The answer is that there was no Eastern '12, and Eastern '98 never existed. For Eastern U. was not incorporated under the laws of the State of New York until A.D. 1909, from which it solemnly follows that Eastern '13 was the university's very first graduating class.

It was Charlie Mason who said they must be gods, and it was Charlie Mason who gave them Janus. Charlie was destined to forge a chain of one hundred and twenty-three movie houses which bring Abbott and Costello to millions, but in those days Charlie was a lean weaver of dreams, the class poet, an antiquarian with a passion for classical allusion. Eastern '13 met on the eve of graduation in the private-party room of McElvy's Brauhaus in Riverdale, and the air was boiling with pipe smoke, malt fumes, and motions when Charlie rose to make his historic speech.

"Mr. Chairman," he said to Bill Updike, who occupied the Temporary Chair. "Fellows," he said to the nine others. And he paused.

Then he said: "We are the first alumni."

He paused again.

"The eyes of the future are on us."

Stan Jones was taking notes, as recording secretary of the evening, and we have Charlie's address verbatim. You have seen it in the Alumni Club lobby, under glass. Brace yourself: it, too, has vanished.

"What we do here tonight, therefore, will initiate a whole codex of Eastern tradition."

And now, the Record records, there was nothing to be heard in that smoky room but the whiz of the electric fan over the lithograph of Woodrow Wilson.

"I have no hesitation in saying—out loud!—that we men in this room tonight—that we're *significant*. Not as individuals! But as the Class of '13!" And then Charlie drew himself up and said quietly: "*They will remember us and we must give them something to remember*"—(the third sacred canon).

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"Such as?" said Morry Green, who was to die in a French ditch five years later.

"A sign," said Charlie. "A symbol, Morry—a symbol of our first-ness."

Eddie Temple, who was graduating eleventh in the class, exhibited his tongue and blew a coarse, fluttery blast.

"That may be the sign you want to be remembered by, Ed," began Charlie crossly—

"Shut up, Temple!" growled Vern Hamisher.

"Read that bird out of the party!" yelled Ziss Brown, who was suspected of holding radical views because his father had stumped for Teddy Roosevelt in '12.

"Sounds good," said Bill Updike, scowling. "Go on, Charlie."

"What sign?" demanded Rod Black.

"Anything specific in mind?" called Johnnie Cudwise.

Charlie said one word.

"*Janus.*"

And he paused.

"Janus," they muttered, considering him.

"Yes, *Janus*," said Charlie. "The god of good beginnings."

"Well, we're beginning," said Morry Green.

"Guaranteed to result in good endings."

"It certainly applies," nodded Bill Updike.

"Yeah," said Bob Smith. "Eastern's sure on its way to big things."

"Janus of the two faces!" cried Charlie Mason mystically. "I wish to point out that he looks in opposite directions!"

"Say, that's right—"

"The past and the future—"

"Smart stuff!"

"Go on, Charlie!"

"Janus!" cried Charlie. "Janus, who was invoked by the Romans before any other god at the beginning of an important undertaking!"

"Wow!"

"This is certainly important!"

"The beginning of the day, month, and year were sacred to him! Janus was the god of doorways!"

"Janus!" they shouted, leaping to their feet—and they raised their tankards and drank deep.

And so from that night forward, the annual meeting of the Class of '13 was held on Janus's Day, the first day of January, and the Class of '13 adopted, by unanimous vote, the praenomen of The

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Januarians. Thus the double-visaged god became patron of Eastern's posterity, and that is why until recently Eastern's official stationery was impressed with his two-bearded profiles. It is also why the phrase "to be two-faced," when uttered by Columbia or N.Y.U. men, usually means "to be a student at, or a graduate of, Eastern U."—a development unfortunately not contemplated by Charlie Mason on that historic eve, at least not consciously.

But let us leave the profounder explorations to psychiatry. Here it is sufficient to record that something more than thirty years later, the phrase suddenly took on a grim verisimilitude, and The Januarians thereupon laid it, so to speak, on the doorstep of one well acquainted with such changelings of chance.

For it was during Christmas week of last year that Bill Updike came—stealthily—to see Ellery. He did not come as young Billy who had presided at the beery board in the private-party room of McElvy's Brauhaus on that June night in 1913. He came, bald, portly, and opulently engraved upon a card: Mr. William Updike, president of The Brokers National Bank of New York, residence Dike Hollow, Scarsdale—and he looked exactly as worried as bankers are supposed to look and rarely do.

"Business, business," said Nikki Porter, shaking her Yuletide permanent. "It's Christmas week, Mr. Updike. I'm sure Mr. Queen wouldn't consider taking—"

But at that moment Mr. Queen emerged from his sanctum to give his secretary the lie.

"Nikki holds to the old-fashioned idea about holidays, Mr. Updike," said Ellery, shaking Bill's hand. "Ah, The Januarians. Isn't your annual meeting a few days from now—on New Year's Day?"

"How did you know—?" began the bank president.

"I could reply, in the manner of the Old Master," said Ellery with a chuckle, "that I've made an intensive study of lapel buttons, but truth compels me to admit that one of my best friends is Eastern '28 and he's described that little emblem on your coat so often I couldn't help but recognize it at once." The banker fingered the disc on his lapel nervously. It was of platinum, ringed with tiny garnets, and the gleaming circle enclosed the two faces of Janus. "What's the matter—is someone robbing your bank?"

"It's worse than that."

"*Worse?*"

"Murder."

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Nikki glared at Mr. Updike. Any hope of keeping Ellery's nose off the grindstone until January second was now merely a memory. But out of duty she began: "Ellery—"

"At least," said Bill Updike tensely, "I think it's murder."

Nikki gave up. Ellery's nose was noticeably honed.

"It's sort of complicated," muttered the banker, and he began to fidget before Ellery's fire. "I suppose you know, Queen, that The Januarians began with only eleven men."

Ellery nodded. "The total graduating class of Eastern '13."

"It seems silly now, with Eastern's classes of three and four thousand, but in those days we thought it was all pretty important."

"Manifest destiny."

"We were young. Anyway, World War I came along and we lost two of our boys right away—Morry Green and Buster Selby. So at our New Year's Day meeting in nineteen twenty we were only nine. Then in the market collapse of '29 Vern Hamisher blew the top of his head off, and in nineteen thirty John Cudwise, who was serving his first term in Congress, was killed in a plane crash on his way to Washington—you probably remember. So we've been just seven for many years now."

"And awfully close friends you must be," said Nikki, curiosity conquering pique.

"Well—" began Updike, and he stopped, to begin over again. "For a long time now we've all thought it was sort of juvenile, but we've kept coming back to those damned New Year's Day meetings out of habit or—or something. No, that's not true. It isn't just habit. It's because it's expected of us." He flushed. "I don't know—they've—well, deified us." He looked bellicose, and Nikki swallowed a giggle hastily. "It's got on our nerves. I mean—well, damn it all, we're not exactly the 'close' friends you'd think!" He stopped again, then resumed in a sort of desperation: "See here, Queen. I've got to confess something. There's been a clique of us within The Januarians for years. We've called ourselves The Inner Circle."

"The what?" gasped Nikki.

The banker mopped his neck, avoiding their eyes. The Inner Circle, he explained, had begun with one of those dully devious phenomena of modern life known as a "business opportunity"—a business opportunity which Mr. Updike, a considerably younger Mr. Updike, had found himself unable to grasp for lack of some essential element, unnamed. Whatever it was that Mr. Updike had required, four other men could supply it—whereupon, in the flush of an earlier

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camaraderie, Updike had taken four of his six fellow-deities into his confidence, and the result of this was a partnership of five of the existing seven Januarians.

"There were certain business reasons why we didn't want our, er, names associated with the, ah, enterprise. So we organized a dummy corporation and agreed to keep our names out of it and the whole thing absolutely secret, even from our—from the remaining two Januarians. It's a secret from them to this day."

"Club within a club," said Nikki. "I think that's cute."

"All five of you in this Inner Circle," inquired Ellery politely, "are alive?"

"We were last New Year's Day. But since the last meeting of The Januarians—" the banker glanced at Ellery's harmless windows furtively "—three of us have died. Three of The Inner Circle."

"And you suspect that they were murdered?"

"Yes. Yes, I do."

"For what motive?"

The banker launched into a very involved and—to Nikki, who was thinking wistfully of New Year's Eve—tiresome explanation. It had something to do with some special fund or other, which seemed to have no connection with the commercial aspects of The Inner Circle's activities—a substantial fund by this time, since each year the five partners put a fixed percentage of their incomes from the dummy corporation into it. Nikki dreamed of balloons and noisemakers.

"—Now equals a reserve of around $200,000 worth of negotiable securities."

Nikki stopped dreaming with a bump.

"What's the purpose of this fund, Mr. Updike?" Ellery was saying sharply. "What happens to it? When?"

"Well, that's just it, Queen," said the banker. "Oh, I know what you'll think—"

"Don't tell me," said Ellery in a terrible voice, "it's a form of tontine insurance plan—last survivor takes all?"

"Yes," whispered William Updike, looking for the moment like Billy Updike.

"I knew it." Ellery jumped out of his fireside chair. "Haven't I told you repeatedly, Nikki, there's no fool like a banker? The financial mentality rarely rises above the age of eight, when life's biggest thrill is to pay five pins for admission to a magic-lantern show in Stinky's cellar. This hard-eyed man of money, whose business it is to deal in safe investments, becomes party to a melodramatic scheme

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whereby the only way you can recoup your ante is to slit the throats of your four partners. Inner Circles! Januarians!" Ellery threw himself back in his chair. "Where's this silly invitation to murder cached, Updike?"

"In a safe-deposit box at the Brokers National," muttered the banker.

"Your own bank. Very cozy for you," said Ellery.

"No, no, Mr. Queen, all five of us have keys to the box."

"What happened to the keys of the three Inner Circleites who died this year?"

"By agreement, dead members' keys are destroyed in the presence of the survivors."

"Then there are only two keys to that safe-deposit box now in existence—yours and the key in the possession of the only other living Inner Circular?"

"Yes."

"And you're afraid said sole-surviving associate murdered the deceased trio of your absurd quintet and has his beady eye on you, Updike? So that as the last man alive of The Inner Circle he would fall heir to the entire $200,000 boodle?"

"What else can I think?" cried the banker.

"The obvious," retorted Ellery. "Which is that your three pals traveled the natural route of all flesh. Is the $200,000 still in the box?"

"Yes. I looked just before coming here today."

"You want me to investigate."

"Yes, yes—"

"Very well. What's the name of this surviving fellow conspirator of yours in The Inner Circle?"

"No," said Bill Updike.

"I beg pardon?"

"Suppose I'm wrong? If they were ordinary deaths, I'd have dragged someone I've known a hell of a long time into a mess. No, you investigate first, Mr. Queen. Find evidence of murder, and I'll go all the way."

"You won't tell me his name?"

"No."

The ghost of New Year's Eve stirred. But then Ellery grinned, and it settled back in the grave. Nikki sighed and reached for her notebook.

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"All right, Mr. Updike. Who were the three Inner Circlovians who died this year?"

"Robert Carlton Smith, J. Stanford Jones, and Ziss Brown—Peter Zissing Brown."

"Their occupations?"

"Bob Smith was head of the Kradle Kap Baby Foods Korporation. Stan Jones was top man of Jones-Jones-Mallison-Jones, the ad agency. Ziss Brown was retired."

"From what?"

Updike said stiffly: "Brassieres."

"I suppose they do pall. Leave me the addresses of the executors, please, and any other data you think might be helpful."

When the banker had gone, Ellery reached for the telephone.

"Oh, dear," said Nikki. "You're not calling Club Bongo?"

"What?"

"You know. New Year's Eve?"

"Heavens, no. My pal Eastern '28. Cully? —The same to you, Cully. Cully, who are the four Januarians? Nikki, take this down. William Updike. Charles Mason? Oh, yes, the god who fashioned Olympus. Rodney Black, Junior—um-hm. And Edward I. Temple. Thanks, Cully. And now forget I called."

Ellery hung up. "Black, Mason, and Temple, Nikki. The only Januarians alive outside of Updike. Consequently, one of those three is Updike's last associate in The Inner Circle."

"And the question is which one."

"Bright girl. But first let's dig into the deaths of Smith, Jones, and Brown. Who knows? Maybe Updike's got something."

It took exactly forty-eight hours to determine that Updike had nothing at all. The deaths of Januarians-Inner Circlers Smith, Jones, and Brown were impeccable.

"Give it to him, Velie," said Inspector Queen at Headquarters the second morning after the banker's visit to the Queen apartment.

Sergeant Velie cleared his massive throat. "The Kradle Kap Baby Foods character—"

"Robert Carlton Smith."

"Rheumatic heart for years. Died in an oxygen tent after the third heart attack in eighteen hours, with three fancy medics in attendance and a secretary who was there to take down his last words."

"Which were probably 'free enterprise,' " said Inspector Queen.

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"Go on, Sergeant!"

"J. Stanford Jones, the huckster. Gassed in World War I, in recent years developed t.b. And that's what he died of. Want the sanitarium affidavits, Maestro? I had photostats telephotoed from Arizona."

"Thorough little man, aren't you?" growled Ellery. "And Peter Zissing Brown, retired from brassieres?"

"Kidneys and gall-bladder. Brown died on the operating table."

"Wait till you see what I'm wearing tonight," said Nikki. "Fuchsia taffeta."

"Nikki, get Updike on the phone," said Ellery absently. "Brokers National."

"He's not there, Ellery," said Nikki when she had put down the Inspector's phone. "Hasn't come into his bank this morning. It has the darlingest bouffant skirt—"

"Try his home."

"Dike Hollow, Scarsdale, wasn't it? With the new back, and a neckline that—hello?" And after a while the three men heard Nikki say in a strange voice: "*What?*" and then "Oh," faintly. She thrust the phone at Ellery. "You'd better take it."

"What's the matter? Hello? Ellery Queen. Updike there?"

A bass voice said, "Well, no, Mr. Queen. He's been in an accident."

"Accident! Who's this speaking?"

"Captain Rosewater of the Highway Police. Mr. Updike ran his car into a ravine near his home here sometime last night. We just found him."

"I hope he's all right!"

"He's dead."

"Four!" Ellery was mumbling as Sergeant Velie drove the Inspector's car up into Westchester. "Four in one year!"

"Coincidence," said Nikki desperately, thinking of the festivities on the agenda for that evening.

"All I know is that forty-eight hours after Updike asks me to find out if his three cronies of The Inner Circle who died this year hadn't been murdered, he himself is found lying in a gulley with four thousand pounds of used car on top of him."

"Accidents," began Sergeant Velie, "will hap—"

"I want to see that 'accident'!"

A state trooper flagged them on the Parkway near a cutoff and sent them down the side road. This road, it appeared, was a shortcut

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to Dike Hollow which Updike habitually used in driving home from the city. His house lay some two miles from the parkway.

They found the evidence of his last drive about midway. The narrow macadam road twisted sharply to the left at this point, but Bill Updike had failed to twist with it. He had driven straight ahead and through a matchstick guardrail into the ravine. As it plunged over, the car had struck the bole of a big old oak. The shock catapulted the banker through his windshield and he had landed at the bottom of the ravine just before his vehicle.

"We're still trying to figure out a way of lifting that junk off him," said Captain Rosewater when they joined him forty feet below the road.

The ravine narrowed in a V here and the car lay in its crotch upside down. Men were swarming around it with crowbars, chains, and acetylene torches. "We've uncovered enough to show us he's mashed flat."

"His face, too, Captain?" asked Ellery suddenly.

"No, his face wasn't touched. We're trying to get the rest of him presentable enough so we can let his widow identify him." The trooper nodded toward a flat rock twenty yards down the ravine on which sat a small woman in a mink coat. She wore no hat and her smart grey hair was whipping in the Christmas wind. A woman in a cloth coat, wearing a nurse's cap, stood over her.

Ellery said, "Excuse me," and strode away. When Nikki caught up with him he was already talking to Mrs. Updike. She was drawn up on the rock in a foetal position.

"He had a directors' meeting at the bank last night. I phoned one of his associates about two A.M. He said the meeting had broken up at eleven and Bill had left to drive home." Her glance strayed up the ravine. "At four-thirty this morning I phoned the police."

"Did you know your husband had come to see me, Mrs. Updike—two mornings ago?"

"Who are you?"

"Ellery Queen."

"No."

"Did you know Robert Carlton Smith, J. Stanford Jones, Peter Zissing Brown?"

"Bill's classmates? They passed away. This year," she added suddenly. "This year," she repeated. And then she laughed. "I thought the gods were immortal."

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"Did you know that your husband, Smith, Jones, and Brown were an 'inner circle' in The Januarians?"

"Inner Circle." She frowned. "Oh, yes, Bill mentioned it occasionally. No, I didn't know they were in it."

Ellery leaned forward in the wind. "Was Edward I. Temple in it, Mrs. Updike? Rodney Black, Junior? Charlie Mason?"

"I don't know. Why are you questioning me?" Her voice was rising now, and Ellery murmured something placative as Captain Rosewater hurried up and said: "Mrs. Updike, if you'd be good enough—"

She jumped off the rock. "*Now?*"

"Please."

The trooper captain took one arm, the nurse the other, and between them they half carried William Updike's widow up the ravine toward the overturned car.

Nikki found it necessary to spend some moments with her handkerchief.

When she looked up, Ellery had disappeared.

She found him with his father and Sergeant Velie on the road above the ravine. They were standing before a great maple looking at a road sign. Studded lettering on the yellow sign spelled out SHARP CURVE AHEAD, and there was an elbowlike illustration.

"No lights on this road," the Inspector was saying as Nikki hurried up, "so he must have had his brights on."

"And they'd sure enough light up this reflector sign. I don't get it, Inspector," complained Sergeant Velie. "Unless his lights just weren't workin'."

"More likely fell asleep over the wheel, Velie."

"No," said Ellery.

"What?"

"Updike's lights were all right, and he didn't doze off."

"I don't impress when I'm c-cold," Nikki said, shivering. "But just the same, how do you know, Ellery?"

Ellery pointed to two neat holes in the maple bark very close to the edge of the sign.

"Woodpeckers?" said Nikki. But the air was grey and sharp as steel, and it was hard to forget Mrs. Updike's look.

"This bird, I'm afraid," drawled Ellery, "had no feathers. Velie, borrow something we can pry this sign off with."

When Velie returned with some tools, he was mopping his face. "She just identified him," he said. "Gettin' warmer, ain't it?"

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"What d'you expect to find, Ellery?" demanded the Inspector.

"*Two full sets of rivet-holes.*"

Sergeant Velie said, "Bong" as the road sign came away from the tree.

"I'll be damned," said Inspector Queen softly. "Somebody removed these rivets last night, *after* Updike crashed into the ravine."

"And riveted the warning sign back on!" cried Nikki. "Only he got careless and didn't use the same holes!"

"Murder," said Ellery. "Smith, Jones, and Brown died of natural causes. But three of the five co-owners of that fund dying in a single year—"

"Gave Number five an idea."

"If Updike died, too, the $200,000 in securities would— Ellery!" roared his father, "where are you running to?"

"There's a poetic beauty about this case," Ellery was saying restlessly to Nikki as they waited in the underground vaults of the Brokers National Bank. "Janus was the god of entrances. Keys were among his trappings of office. In fact, he was sometimes known as Patulcius—'opener.' Opener! I knew at once we were too late."

"You knew, you knew," said Nikki peevishly. "And New Year's Eve only hours away! You can be wrong."

"Not this time. Why else was Updike murdered last night in such a way as to make it appear an accident? Our mysterious Januarian hotfooted it down here first thing this morning and cleaned out that safe-deposit box belonging to The Inner Circle. The securities are gone, Nikki."

Within an hour, Ellery's prophecy was historical fact.

The box was opened with Bill Updike's key. It was empty.

And of Patulcius, no trace. It quite upset the Inspector. For it appeared that The Inner Circle had contrived a remarkable arrangement for access to their safe-deposit box. It was gained not by the customary signature on an admission slip, but through the presentation of a talisman. This talisman was quite unlike the lapel button of The Januarians. It was a golden key, and on the key was incised the two-faced god, within concentric circles. The outer circle was of Januarian garnets, the inner of diamonds. A control had been deposited in the files of the vault company. Anyone presenting a replica of it was to be admitted to The Inner Circle's repository by order of no less a personage, the vault manager informed them, than the late President Updike himself—who, Inspector Queen remarked

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with bitterness, had been more suited by temperament to preside over the Delancey Street Junior Spies.

"Anybody remember admitting a man this morning who flashed one of these doojiggers?"

An employee was found who duly remembered, but when he described the vault visitor as great-coated and mufflered to the eyes, wearing dark glasses, walking with a great limp, and speaking in a laryngitical whisper, Ellery said wearily: "Tomorrow's the annual meeting of The Januarians, Dad, and Patulcius won't dare not to show up. We'd better try to clean it up there."

These, then, were the curious events preceding the final meeting of The Januarians in the thirteenth-floor sanctuary of the Eastern Alumni Club, beyond the door bearing the stainless-steel medallion of the god Janus.

We have no apocryphal writings to reveal what self-adoring mysteries were performed in that room on other New Year's Days, but on January the first of this year the Januarians held a most unorthodox service, in that two lay figures—the Queens, *pater et filius*—moved in and administered some rather heretical sacraments; so there is a full record of the last rites.

It began with Sergeant Velie knocking thrice upon the steel faces of Janus at five minutes past two o'clock on the afternoon of the first of January, and a thoroughly startled voice from within the holy of holies calling: "Who's there?" The Sergeant muttered an *Ave* and put his shoulder to the door. Three amazed, elderly male faces appeared. The heretics entered and the service began.

It is a temptation to describe in loving detail, for the satisfaction of the curious, the interior of the tabernacle—its stern steel furniture seizing the New Year's Day sun and tossing it back in the form of imperious light, the four-legged altar, the sacred vessels in the shape of beakers, the esoteric brown waters, and so on—but there has been enough of profanation, and besides the service is more to our point.

It was chiefly catechistical, proceeding in this wise:

INSPECTOR: Gentlemen, my name is Inspector Queen, I'm from Police Headquarters, this is my son Ellery, and the big mugg on the door is Sergeant Velie of my staff.

BLACK: Police? Ed, do you know anything about—?

TEMPLE: Not me, Rodney. Maybe Charlie, ha-ha?

MASON: What is it, Inspector? This is a private clubroom—

INSPECTOR: Which one are you?

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MASON: Charles Mason—Mason's Theater Chain. But—

INSPECTOR: The long drink of water—what's your name?

TEMPLE: Me? Edward I. Temple. Attorney. What's the meaning—

INSPECTOR: I guess, Tubby, that makes you Rodney Black, Junior, of Wall Street.

BLACK: Sir!

ELLERY: Which one of you gentlemen belonged to The Inner Circle of The Januarians?

MASON: Inner what, what?

BLACK: Circle, I think he said, Charlie.

TEMPLE: Inner Circle? What's that?

SERGEANT: One of 'em's a John Barrymore, Maestro.

BLACK: See here, we're three-fourths of what's left of the class of Eastern '13.

ELLERY: Ah, then you gentlemen don't know that Bill Updike is dead?

ALL: Dead! *Bill?*

INSPECTOR: Tell 'em the whole story, Ellery.

And so, patiently, Ellery recounted the story of The Inner Circle, William Updike's murder, and the vanished $200,000 in negotiable securities. And as he told this story, the old gentleman from Center Street and his sergeant studied the three elderly faces—and the theater magnate, the lawyer, and the broker gave stare for stare. And when Ellery had finished they turned to one another and gave stare for stare once more.

And finally Charlie Mason said: "My hands are clean, Ed. How about yours?"

"What do you take me for, Charlie?" said Temple in a flat and chilling voice. And they both looked at Black, who squeaked: "Don't try to make *me* out the one, you traitors!"

Whereupon, as if there were nothing more to be said, the three divinities turned and gazed bleakly upon the iconoclasts.

And the catechism resumed:

ELLERY: Mr. Temple, where were you the night before last between eleven P.M. and midnight?

TEMPLE: Let me see. Night before last. That was the night before New Year's Eve. I went to bed at ten o'clock.

ELLERY: You're a bachelor, I believe. Do you employ a domestic?

TEMPLE: My man.

ELLERY: Was he—

TEMPLE: He sleeps out.

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SERGEANT: No alibi!

INSPECTOR: How about you, Mr. Black?

BLACK: Well, the fact is I'd gone to see a musical in town. Between eleven and twelve I was driving home to White Plains.

SERGEANT: Ha! White Plains!

ELLERY: Alone, Mr. Black?

BLACK: Well—yes. The family's all away over the holidays.

INSPECTOR: No alibi. Mr. Mason?

MASON: Go to hell. (*There is a knock on the door.*)

SERGEANT: Now who would that be?

TEMPLE: The ghost of Bill?

BLACK: You're not funny, Ed!

ELLERY: Come in. (*The door opens. Enter Nikki Porter.*)

NIKKI: I'm sorry to interrupt, but she came looking for you, Ellery. She was terribly insistent. Said she'd just recalled something about The Inner Circle and—

ELLERY: She?

NIKKI: Come in, Mrs. Updike.

"They're here," said Mrs. Updike. "I'm glad. I wanted to look at their faces."

"I've told Mrs. Updike the whole thing," said Nikki defiantly.

And Inspector Queen said in a soft tone: "Velie, shut the door."

But this case was not to be solved by a guilty look. Black, Mason, and Temple said quick ineffectual things, surrounding the widow and spending their nervousness in little gestures and rustlings until finally silence fell and she said helplessly, "Oh, I don't know, I don't know," and dropped into a chair to weep.

And Black stared out the window, and Mason looked green, and Temple compressed his lips.

Then Ellery went to the widow and put his hand on her shoulder. "You recall something about The Inner Circle, Mrs. Updike?"

She stopped weeping and folded her hands, resting them in her lap and looking straight ahead.

"Was it the names of the five?"

"No. Bill never told me their names. But I did remember Bill's saying to me once: 'Mary, I'll give you a hint.' "

"Hint?"

"Bill said that he once realized there was something funny about the names of the five men in The Inner Circle."

"Funny?" said Ellery sharply. "About their *names?*"

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"He said by coincidence all five names had one thing in common."

"In common?"

"And he laughed." Mrs. Updike paused. "He laughed, and he said: 'That is, Mary, if you remember that I'm a married man.' I remember saying: 'Bill, stop talking in riddles. What do you mean?' And he laughed again and said: 'Well, you see, Mary, *you're in it, too.*' "

"You're in it, too," said Nikki blankly.

"I have no idea what he meant, but that's what Bill said, word for word." And now she looked up at Ellery and asked, with a sort of ferocious zest: "Does any of this help, Mr. Queen?"

"Oh, yes," said Ellery gently. "All of it, Mrs. Updike." And he turned to the three silent Januarians and said: "Would any of you gentlemen like to try your wits against this riddle?"

But the gentlemen remained silent.

"The reply appears to be no," Ellery said. "Very well, let's work it out en masse. Robert Carlton Smith, J. Stanford Jones, Peter Zissing Brown, William Updike. Those four names, according to Bill Updike, have one thing in common. What?"

"Smith," said the Inspector.

"Jones," said the Sergeant.

"Brown," said Nikki.

"Updike!" said the Inspector. "Boy, you've got me."

"Include me in, Maestro."

"Ellery, please!"

"Each of the four names," said Ellery, "has in it, somewhere, the name of a well known college or university."

And there was another mute communion.

"Robert—Carlton—Smith," said the Inspector doubtfully.

"Smith!" cried Nikki. "Smith College, in Massachusetts!"

The Inspector looked startled. "J. Stanford Jones. That California university—Stanford!"

"Hey," said Sergeant Velie. "Brown. Brown University in Rhode Island!"

"Updike," said Nikki, then she stopped. "Updike? There's no college called Updike, Ellery."

"William Updike was his full name, Nikki."

"You mean the William part? There's a Williams, but no William."

"What did Updike tell Mrs. Updike? 'Mary, you're in it, too.' William Updike was in it, and Mary Updike was in it . . ."

"William and Mary!" roared the Inspector.

"So the college denominator checks for all four of the known

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names. But since Updike told his wife the fifth name had the same thing in common, all we have to do now is test the names of these three gentlemen to see if one of them is the name of a college or university—and we'll have the scoundrel who murdered Bill Updike for The Inner Circle's fortune in securities."

"Black," babbled Rodney Black, Junior. "Rodney Black, Junior. Find me a college in that, sir!"

"Charles Mason," said Charles Mason unsteadily. "Charles? Mason? You see!"

"That," said Ellery, "sort of hangs it around your neck, Mr. Temple."

"Temple!"

"Temple University in Pennsylvania!"

Of course, it was all absurd. Grown men who played at godhead with emblems and talismans, like boys conspiring in a cave, and a murder case which was solved by a trick of nomenclature. Eastern University is too large for that sort of childishness. And it is old enough, we submit, to know the truth:

Item: Edward I. Temple, Class of Eastern '13, did not "fall" from the thirteenth floor of the Eastern Alumni Club on New Year's Day this year. He jumped.

Item: The Patulcius Chair of Classics, founded this year, was not endowed by a wealthy alumnus from Oil City who modestly chose anonymity. It came into existence through the contents of The Inner Circle's safe-deposit box, said contents having been recovered from another safe-deposit box rented by said Temple in another bank on the afternoon of December thirty-first under a false name.

Item: The Januarian Room was not converted to the storage of linen because of the expanding housekeeping needs of the Eastern Alumni Club. It was ordered so that the very name of the Society of the Two-Faced God should be expunged from Eastern's halls. And as for the stainless-steel medallion of Janus which had hung on the door, the Chancellor of Eastern University himself scaled it into the Hudson River from the George Washington Bridge during a sleet storm one hideous night this January.

"Q"

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a *NEW* short story by

CELIA FREMLIN

Celia Fremlin's impressive fiction has been appearing in EQMM since 1967. This latest story, "Yellow Ken," is a perfect example of the distinctive qualities that have always made receiving a story from her a red-letter day at the Davis offices.

Ken had to content himself with watching, with a mixture of envy and disapproval, these golden lads of the new, take-it-easy generation. Naked to the waist, bronzed and sunburnt like they were on holiday, and what with that and with their pop music on all day long, why, they might as well have been at the seaside and be done with it. Ken tried to picture what his *boss would have said if* he'd *dared to strip off like that on a sunny day. . . !*

YELLOW KEN

by CELIA FREMLIN

Tomorrow the scaffolding would be coming down. Slumped in his armchair by the window, recovering slowly from a nasty attack of bronchitis, Ken watched the last of the evening light flicker and die along the shining bars that encased the row of houses opposite. A right do they'd been having with those roofs, and no mistake, the joists half rotted and the slates past praying for after so many years of neglect. Certainly it was high time something was done, Ken would be the last to deny that, but having worked in the building trade himself for over forty years he felt entitled now, from his armchair, to criticize every detail of the work going on opposite. Those plastic gutters, for instance: light and easy to handle, no doubt, compared with the massive cast-iron lengths he and his mates in their day had had to manhandle up the scaffolding. And of course this new stuff couldn't rust. But would it last a hundred years like

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the old ones had done? And would have lasted another hundred, Ken would swear to it, if only they'd been properly maintained and seen to.

Soft they had it now, the lads, with their flimsy materials and all that labor-saving stuff—electric saws and metal-cutters and such. Just press a button and Bob's your uncle! It almost hurt him, somewhere deep in his craftsman's soul, to watch how easy it was. It couldn't be right, not really.

Not to go out, the doctor had told him, not until that cough's quite cleared. No, not even in this bright sunny weather they'd been having this autumn—the air was still treacherous and could set him right back. So Ken had had to content himself with sitting in the front-room window, watching, with a mixture of envy and disapproval, these golden lads of the new, take-it-easy generation. Naked to the waist, bronzed and sunburnt like they were on holiday, and what with that and with their pop music on all day long, why, they might as well have been at the seaside, Margate or such, and be done with it. Ken tried to picture what *his* boss would have said if *he'd* dared to strip off like that on a sunny day! Always they'd had to cover themselves decent, however hot the weather and no matter how they'd run with sweat. And as for the transistors! Admittedly, there weren't any transistors then, but Ken had no difficulty at all in imagining what his boss would have said about them if there had been!

And on top of all this, what fine figures they were, these fellows today, with their big, well shaped bodies and straight limbs, built up as kids on all this Welfare and stuff. Twice the size they were of what Ken and his mates used to be, children of the Depression, undersized and skinny, and half of them bow-legged with rickets into the bargain.

How unfair it was! Just when the work had become dead-easy, it was these big, muscular, well grown chaps who were the ones to be doing it! Whereas when the job had been hard and heavy and lasting a full twelve-hour day, then it was us half-starved little runts what had to tackle it!

Ah, but what vigor we had, somewhere in our skinny, undernourished bodies. What strength, what staying power. And what agility, too, swinging from bar to bar with half-hundred-weight loads on our backs and landing dead perfect on whatever narrow kind of a ledge. They couldn't do it now, not like we used to, that was for sure. Just let 'em try!

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Five o'clock—quarter-to, to be exact—and work was already just about finished for the day. They were packing up, he could hear metal rods being stacked into one of the lorries and a couple of the boys were roping up the ladders for the night. Not even five o'clock yet, and they hadn't arrived on the site until nearly nine this morning! Talk about the life of Reilly!

All the same, when they'd finished packing up and the last of them had clambered into the yellow van and driven away, Ken felt bereft and sad. Scornful though he'd felt of the new-fangled ways, there'd nevertheless been a feeling of comradeship through the long day of shared activity. Changed though so much of it was, their trade was still his trade, they were his mates—though, of course, they didn't know it, in their world beyond the window-glass. And though in his mind he had been mercilessly criticizing the way they were tackling the job, these very criticisms had seemed like a sort of participation in the work, an unrecognized but vital involvement.

He sighed and reached out instinctively for his pipe on the arm of the chair. But of course it wasn't there. No more smoking, the doctor had said, not unless he wanted to be laid up all winter, and probably all summer as well.

So, no comforting pipe, and nothing more happening outside the window until tomorrow. No, not even tomorrow—for tomorrow the scaffolding was to come down. Of course they'd still be around for several days yet, clearing up and such, but it wouldn't be the same. Much though he had disapproved, the sight of these effortless young giants stooping and reaching among the bars, laughing, calling out to each other, had brought back to Ken memories of his own working days—so vivid, so poignant at times he'd seemed to feel his own tired shoulders bracing themselves against the weights and stresses of long ago, his own thin legs tingling with the feel of trembling metal beneath them, and his spine tensing itself into perfect balance above forty-foot abysses of danger.

And now it was over. From where he sat, the scaffolding looked almost black silhouetted against the evening sky. Each evening now for many weeks he had sat thus watching the light dying along the skeleton bars, and he was looking at it now for the last time. Tomorrow evening it would be gone—and as this thought sank in, he was filled with a huge longing, a longing so intense, and on the face of it so impracticable, that his first instinct was simply to suppress it. To not think about it any more, to let it die of not being thought about, as so many longings do. During his seventy-odd years of

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struggle and making do, Ken had known many longings that couldn't be fulfilled. By now he was a past master in the various ways of suppressing them. And so he could surely suppress this one, too, just like all the others—why not?

But on the other hand, why? Staring up at the scaffolding blackly crisscrossed against the greenish sky, Ken felt the longing rising in him with an intolerable intensity, like being in love. And—also like being in love—it brought with it the mystic certainty that nothing is impossible, that whatever he wanted to do he would find in himself the power to do it.

And what he wanted to do was to climb up that scaffolding and have a look at what they'd done. In particular, he wanted to look at that new-fangled roofing they'd been using in place of the old slates. Large sheets of plastic it appeared to consist of—but how were the sheets dovetailed not to let the wet in along the cracks? Or were they overlapping in some way? And if they were overlapping, then how were they clamped down so's not to rise at the first wind and let the rain in? Had they thought of it, these architect chaps, sitting in their offices hundreds of miles away? Did they ever know of the high winds that come sweeping down the valley hereabouts in late wintertime? Did they know the strength of them, what they could do once they slipped in under a flexible great sheet like that, got a purchase on it, the way it couldn't happen with slates?

The longing to see, to examine, to assess this work that had held his attention for so many weary days of convalescence filled Ken with such a surge of excitement that it set his cough off again, quite badly, and he wondered, during the minutes while he choked and spluttered, what his doctor would say to the plan taking shape in his mind?

He would say no, of course—but then doctors don't know everything. They don't know, at least most of them don't, about that surge of the spirit to which "No" cannot be said.

He must curb his impatience, though, until midnight or thereabouts. If he set off on his escapade too early, someone would be bound to catch sight of him and the neighbors would be out like a pack of do-gooding wolves, howling for him to come down.

"You'll fall!" they'd shriek. "You're going to slip!" "Watch out! Come down!" "He's got to come down! An old man like that—!" "He's mad!" "It's suicide! Fetch the police!" "Fetch the fire brigade!" "Get him down! Get him down!"

Get him down, indeed! Already chuckling deep in his throat, Ken

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went out to the kitchen to get himself a bit of supper before his adventure. Thank goodness he *could* get it for himself now, the Home Helps and the Dinner Ladies and the District Nurse were leaving him alone at last, moving on, like migrating birds, to the next disaster on their list.

Buttered toast. Baked beans with a fried egg on top. He hadn't had an appetite like this since he first became ill. He ate the meal at the kitchen table, then went back to his seat in the front-room window and waited for midnight, and for the neighbors to be safely in bed, and for the moon to rise.

In the vast, pale light the scaffolding looked magical, huge, far larger and more overwhelming than it had seemed from across the road, and when he reached up and touched one of the bars it was so cold that his hand leapt away of its own accord and he almost exclaimed aloud at the shock. Not that it was any colder—or indeed anything like as cold—as such bars had been on many a frosty morning in his youth, but all the same it was unexpected somehow, and he took a moment to get over it and to get his breath back. Then, pulling himself together, he reached up to the bar again, took a firm grip on it, and tilted his head back, peering upward into the bland and dazzling paleness of the night sky.

It was going to be difficult, he could see. The horizontal bars one above the other were a good three feet apart, a tidy stretch for his old legs, and there was no way he could use the ladders, roped up the way they were for the night, with boards against them. So the bars it would have to be.

Time was when he would have skimmed from one to the next quite effortlessly with his young limbs, but now it seemed to require agonizing contortions of both body and spirit to get his left knee onto the second bar while his right foot still rested on the lower one, three feet below. His joints rebelled, his muscles groaned, his whole body quivered with the strain, and with the precariousness of his situation.

However, he managed it somehow, and there he was, six feet above the ground already! He would like to have paused to savor this tiny triumph, and to rest for a little, but the narrow icy bar on which he was perched stuck savagely into his knee, his muscles were all atremble, and there was nothing for it but to keep going, to keep moving, to keep looking upward.

The next stage took him a good nine feet up—then it was twelve

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or more. At twenty feet or thereabouts, he was forced to pause to recover his breath, and to beat down, by sheer will power, a threatened attack of coughing. And here, making the mistake of glancing down to see how far he had come, he was attacked by a wave of such panic and giddiness as he hadn't experienced since his apprentice days when they'd sent him up to the very top of that office block. He remembered still the howls of jeering that had greeted his sign of panic, his white face and juddering knees. "Ken's yellow! Yellow Ken!" they'd shrieked delightedly—and across more than half a century the memory of those mocking voices was his salvation, just as they'd been his salvation at the time. I'll show them, he'd said to himself that summer morning nearly sixty years ago. Yellow Ken! *I'll show them*! And show them he had, becoming within a very few weeks one of the most daring of them all.

And he would show them again now, long-vanished though they all were, most of them dead probably, thronging nonexistent in the deserted street, voiceless in the quiet of the moonlight. Yellow Ken, indeed! Under the stimulus of that long-silent mockery, he found the strength he needed. On, on he struggled—up and up into the cool shadowless expanse of moonshine and the empty whistling air.

He was forty feet up now, on a level with the roofs—and here came an unexpected setback. He could see that all his effort had been in vain. They had already removed the roof platforms, and there was no way now, no way at all, of crossing the fearful gap between the top bar of the scaffolding and the edge of the new roofing. Once, perhaps, he might have reached out, got a good grip on the gutter near to the down-pipe, and pulled himself over, but now, even if his aging muscles had become miraculously young, what sort of a fool would a chap have to be to trust his weight to that flimsy plastic guttering?

Impossible. The whole venture had been pointless, an old man's folly. Serve him right for ever having imagined that he might somehow, just this once, get his own way against the relentless obstacles of life. They'd always stood in his way before, just like they did for most people, and they were going to go on doing it. Silly ever to have expected otherwise. Nothing for it but to clamber down the way he had come.

And it was only now, when he set himself to do just this, that a new and terrible truth was borne in upon him. Climbing up had been difficult enough, stretching his enfeebled powers to their limit.

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Climbing down, he now perceived, was going to be impossible. His right knee balanced on the top bar, his left foot wildly waving to make contact with the lower one, he experienced a terrifying moment of losing his balance utterly and had to drag himself up again, clinging with both hands, to regain his former crouching position, giddy, helpless, and with no way forward or back.

Now what?

Already aching with effort, tense with fear, the mere thought of having to sustain this cramped position for any length of time was horrifying. But even more horrifying was the slightest attempt to shift himself into any other. Everything hurt, everything unbalanced him. His joints protested their agony, cramp seized his calves, and, worse than anything, he could feel the trembling beginning, the trembling that must be brought to a stop instantly or it would escalate into violent paroxysms beyond all control.

He must calm himself. He'd never thought, somehow, that his body would fail him, but fail him it had, and he must think of it now like a tool inadequate to the job in hand. No new experience this, not really. Being issued with inadequate equipment or the wrong tools was one of the hazards of the trade, and it was rarely any use to complain, to demand fresh supplies—you just had to use your wits and make the best of what they'd issued you. This was what he must do now with his outworn, outmoded, inadequate body. This was what he'd been issued with, and this was what he must use as best he could.

First and foremost, he must stop it trembling. Force it, in spite of its protests, in spite of its aches and pains, to keep still, to keep its balance, and to wait for something to happen. Because, of course, something *would* happen—something always did. This at least you learn from a long life: nothing goes on and on. Something always happens.

And, sure enough, something did, though whether it was minutes or hours later Ken couldn't have guessed, so numb was he with cold and fear. Nor could he guess, to begin with, whether it was good luck coming his way or something very, very bad.

He was familiar, of course, with the slight "pinging" sound that comes through the bars of scaffolding when someone walks along it, even at quite a distance, but at first he thought he must be imagining it. Or perhaps even causing it by some inadvertent movement of his own. He kept absolutely still, moving not a muscle, not

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even breathing, and yet still he could hear that faint "ping" of the stressed metal, could still feel the bar trembling unevenly beneath him.

There was someone else on the scaffolding—of this Ken, with all his years of experience, could be in no doubt. But who? And what were they after? Up to no good, surely, at this hour of the night and, if so, then what would they do when they caught sight of him, an unwilling witness to their misdeeds? Imagination could run riot over a thousand news items of old people attacked by young thugs—knives, guns, strangulation, the lot. He couldn't actually recall any item about an old man being pushed off a scaffolding, but there had to be a first time.

Louder came the metallic sounds, more dreadful the shaking and shuddering of the bar he sat on. They were coming nearer. Nearer! More than one of them, surely! And suddenly the scaffolding gave a great lurch beneath him, as if just about to go crashing to the ground!

There followed absolute silence—but Ken didn't wait to wonder at it. That sudden violent lurch had filled him with such panic, had flooded his bloodstream with such a rush of adrenaline that for a few seconds he was young again, slithering from his perch and scuttering, almost falling, from bar to bar, and reaching the ground miraculously unhurt except for grazed hands and a few bruises. In moments he was across the road, back home again, his front door locked and bolted behind him.

It was next morning when he heard the news of the burglary over the road. Apparently someone had gained entry into one of the houses by skillfully unfastening one of the panels of the new roof and had got away with cameras, binoculars—all sorts. No wonder there'd been that lurch of the scaffolding, with whoever it was manhandling his loot over from the roof onto it. Ken had little doubt about where the culprits were to be found—they'd been lightfingered in his day, too.

The police might have had little doubt, either, had it not been for the evidence of a certain Miss Foskett, who said that at about one A.M. she'd heard a funny noise and, going to her bedroom window, had caught sight of someone on the scaffolding. A young boy, she thought it was, slight and small, perhaps about fourteen—and, as she watched, he'd been slithering down the scaffolding, agile as a monkey, and had disappeared into the darkness.

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"A young boy—agile as a monkey." A heartwarming description for someone in his middle seventies, and Ken chuckled to himself. But he had something else to chuckle about as well. From being a helpless invalid, he had overnight become a man of power, a man with a little bit of destiny in his hands. He had only to tell the police of his escapade last night and they would at once abandon their search for Miss Foskett's hypothetical young boy and turn their attention to the builders, among whom it was far more likely that the culprit would be found, if only because of the expertise shown in manipulating the roof panels.

On the other hand, Ken had only to do nothing and they would continue to follow their false trail to nowhere among the local school kids.

Ken had no hesitation over which course to follow. He had never betrayed his mates yet and he certainly wasn't going to start now. But all the same, he had the power—and as he watched them from his front window later that morning, he felt like a king among them, a victorious general saving his troops from defeat and ruin. The whole future of one or more of them, perhaps of the whole team, was in his hands, and they could trust him to the death.

When the doctor came, that very afternoon, he was amazed at the improvement in his patient. His chest was clear, his cough was almost gone.

"I'm glad to see you've been taking my advice," the doctor observed complacently, snapping his bag shut. "Staying indoors, avoiding chills and overexertion—it's the only way at your time of life."

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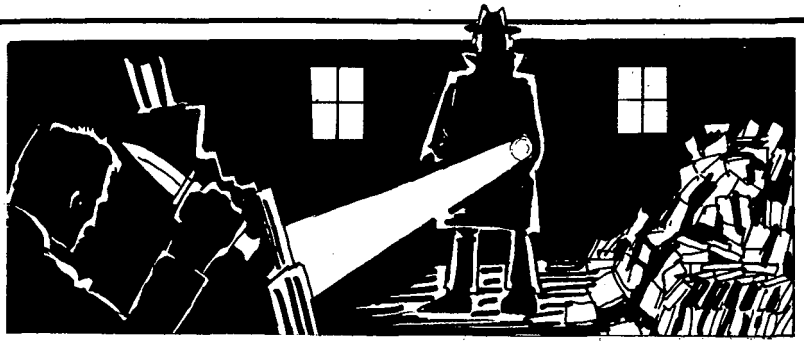

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EQMM 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONTEST

To celebrate EQMM's fifty years of publication, we are sponsoring a contest consisting of fifty questions that may well elicit knowledge of the magazine you didn't realize you had. There will be five questions in each of the first ten issues of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1991, starting with this January issue. The questions are below and the rules and other information on the facing page.

Note that no answers will be accepted until all fifty questions have appeared and that all fifty answers must be sent to us as a unit to qualify.

1. Who was the artist who created the first and many subsequent covers of EQMM?

2. Name the famous movie actor/writer/director who published a story in EQMM?

3. Which member of a singing group well known in the Sixties wrote several stories that were published in EQMM?

4. What distinguished writer on food (*How To Cook a Wolf, Consider the Oyster*) published a story in EQMM?

5. Who wrote "The Trailor Murder Mystery," which was reprinted in EQMM in 1952?

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The winner will be the top scorer in answering 50 questions related to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*—there will be 5 questions an issue from January through October 1991. In case of a tie, the earliest postmark will determine the winner. The deadline is October 15, 1991—entries should carry a postmark no later than that date.

All 50 questions must be submitted as a unit, the pages or copies of the pages for all ten issues together. Material sent in sections will not be considered. Only one entry will be allowed per person. All entries must include the contestant's legal name and full address. No entries will be returned, even if accompanied by a return envelope. Winners will be notified by mail and announced in the March 1992 issue. (No phone calls, please.)

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a *NEW* Michael Vlado story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Michael had lived all of his forty-odd years in Romania and even bore the name of Romania's last king. He had no desire to pack up everything and set off for East or West Germany as others were now advocating. "Then find us a better place," the other Gypsy kings in the area challenged him. "Find us a place where we can raise our horses and our crops and still be safe from persecution."

Edward D. Hoch's fiction has appeared in EQMM since 1962. There has been a story by him in every issue since May 1973! Anyone who has forged a single detective story from scratch, or tried to, knows what a mind-bending feat this is . . .

FUNERAL FOR A GYPSY

by EDWARD D. HOCH

In the months that followed Romania's political upheavals, there was a fear among the Gypsies living in the foothills of the Transylvanian Alps that their situation could get worse instead of better. Ignored and denied by the previous government, they were now in danger of being regulated, which was even worse.

That spring, Michael Vlado held many meetings with the other Gypsy kings in the area. He had lived all of his forty-odd years in this country and even bore the name of Romania's last king. He had no desire to pack up everything and set off for East or West Germany as others were now advocating.

"Then find us a better place," they challenged him. "Find us a place where we can raise our horses and our crops and still be safe from persecution."

When the warm days of June came, Michael left his village and set off alone to see if such a place existed. He had a friend named

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Janos Kopular who'd done very well for himself in the north of Italy, operating a fun-fair that traveled around to the outskirts of cities and towns in the region. There were many Gypsy horse traders in the area, Michael knew, and certainly the government would be less unfriendly there.

He took the train to Trieste, then crossed the Italian frontier and boarded a bus for the short ride to Udine, a small city where Janos and his family lived when they were not on the road with the fun-fair. Udine was a city of 100,000 people, with low buildings, curving streets, and a great many small cars and motorcycles. The day Michael arrived, a Tuesday in mid-June, was sunny and quite warm. The address he'd been given for the Kopular residence was only a few blocks from the station and he set off for it on foot, carrying the old carpetbag he often used in his travels.

But when he reached the street he was seeking and started up its gently rising slope, he spotted a funeral wreath on the door of number 45. For a moment he thought he must have the wrong house in the row of connected white dwellings, all looking alike, but then the front door opened and he recognized Kalla Kopular, Janos's twenty-year-old daughter.

"Kalla, what's happened?"

"My father is dead," she told him, and he wasn't even certain she remembered who he was. Her eyes were red from crying and she was twisting a damp handkerchief between her hands.

"He was an old friend of mine, Kalla," Michael said, introducing himself. "Was his death sudden?"

"Very sudden. He died in an accident at the fun-fair two nights ago."

"Is your mother inside? I must extend my sympathy."

"Follow me." If she'd been about to leave the house when he saw her at the door, Kalla delayed her departure, leading him into the small foyer. At once he felt a chill, facing a large wood-framed mirror that had been covered with a black cloth. It reminded him of the vampire superstitions in his native Romania, although this was merely a Gypsy custom to insure that the deceased's soul would not be trapped inside the house.

A pale woman in a black dress rose to her feet as he entered the living room. "Michael Vlado!" She breathed the words almost like an answered prayer, and he recognized at once Janos Kopular's widow, Rosa.

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"I came here to visit him," Michael explained. "I had no knowledge of the accident."

"It was no accident, Michael. Janos was murdered."

"Tell me—" he began, but almost at once they were interrupted by a tall, scowling man who looked vaguely familiar to Michael.

"You are Michael Vlado, my brother's friend. Welcome."

"Hello, Rajko," Michael said, dredging up the name from the depths of his memory. Rajko was Janos' younger brother—he remembered them touring together in small Gypsy circuses a decade ago. Janos operated crooked three-shell games for the locals while Rajko awed them by flicking lighted cigarettes from his girl friend's lips with a twenty-foot bullwhip. That was before Janos managed to buy his own small fun-fair from the family of the previous owner and set about improving it.

"Thank you for coming," Rajko said. "I didn't know the word had spread as far as your village."

"I came to see your brother on another matter, but that can wait. It is too sad a day."

"Rosa is taking it very hard," Rajko remarked, gazing after her as she went to greet another mourner.

Michael saw that the expensively carved wooden coffin occupied the far end of the sitting room, surrounded by flowers and plants. The black-garbed Rosa had gone to greet a slender, brown-haired man who didn't appear to be a Rom. He moved up to join her and she brought him back to introduce him. "This is Michael Vlado, a Gypsy king who has come all the way from his Romanian village to mourn my husband's death. Michael, meet Desmond Tanner. He has come here from England to look at our fun-fair."

"A pleasure to meet you," Michael said, wondering what the man's business was.

"I've been looking at some of the small Gypsy circuses in this area," Tanner explained, speaking Italian with a strong British accent. "I scout for Gargantua, the great continental circus."

"I've heard of them."

"Unfortunately, we've never played Romania, but with the fading of the Iron Curtain I think all of Eastern Europe will hear of us shortly."

"How did it happen?" Michael asked Rosa, anxious to resume their interrupted conversation.

It was Tanner who answered. "Janos fell from the chair swing while it was going at full speed. I was there."

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"I can't believe it! What was he doing on it in the first place?"

The Englishman shrugged, reluctant to say more in front of Rosa. "They say he was drunk," Rosa replied. "That is not true."

"Were you there when it happened?" Michael asked.

"Our daughter Kalla was there. She saw it all. She thinks he was shot."

Others came and went, and before long Michael found himself among the family members, greeting them. Kalla returned from wherever she'd been, her eyes still red from crying. Michael was beginning to think he'd be spending the evening there, when the family dog attempted to enter the house and provided him with a means of exit.

"Get that animal out of here!" Rosa almost screamed. Like the covered mirrors, it was part of the Gypsy superstition in this part of the world that if an animal entered the house while a body was displayed there, the spirit of the deceased might take possession of it.

"I'll take him away," Michael volunteered. "Is there anyone to care for him until after the funeral?"

"Fiora, the butcher," someone said. "Down at the end of the street. The dog's name is Georgio."

Michael tied a rope around the dog's neck and led it down the street. It was a friendly animal with tan fur and a tongue that was constantly hanging out. At the end of the street, the butcher in his shop was glad to see him. "We're old friends," he told Michael, playfully nuzzling the dog. His name was Benny Fiora and his shop looked as if it had been there for generations. "Are you here for the funeral?"

Michael nodded. "I'm a friend of the family."

"Gypsy?"

"Yes."

"I have no trouble with Gypsies. They are my best customers. Some shopowners say they cheat and steal, but those are only the nomads. The Kopulars have lived here for as long as I can remember. In the summer like this, Janos and the family go off with the fun-fair, but otherwise they are here." He paused and lowered his head as if in prayer. "A terrible thing about Janos. The man was not yet fifty years old."

"Have you been to the fun-fair?"

The butcher nodded. "I was there two nights ago when the accident happened. This week they are just outside town, a half hour from

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here. I drove out there with my little boy." The man smiled at the memory. "It was getting dark and he went walking by himself. But then he saw a snake and came running back to me."

"You actually saw the accident happen?"

"Well, I think we were heading back to the car then. I heard some people yelling and I realized someone had fallen from the swinging chairs. I didn't want to go back because of the boy, so I didn't know until later it was Janos."

"Can you take care of the dog until after the funeral tomorrow?"

"Of course. Tell them not to worry."

Like many Gypsies in the north of Italy, the Kopular family followed the practices of the Catholic Church even while adhering to the old Gypsy customs. Michael was pressed into service as one of the half dozen pallbearers, and as they carried out the coffin they found themselves in the midst of a flower-laden procession led by three altar boys, one of them carrying a cross. A uniformed policeman walked alongside.

Michael was the only one of the pallbearers to wear a jacket. The other five, all younger men, were in their shirtsleeves. Carrying the heavy coffin the six blocks to the church was no easy task. When they finally reached their destination, a priest was waiting at the door to read the initial prayers for the dead. Looking back, Michael was surprised to see perhaps two hundred people in the procession. Janos Kopular had been a familiar figure in the town.

The funeral Mass lasted less than an hour, and when Michael lifted the coffin once more he learned they didn't have far to go. Kopular was being laid to rest in the Catholic cemetery behind the church, a walled area where each grave was given a separate little area for loved ones to bring flowers and pictures of the deceased. On some of the Gypsy graves Michael noticed small statues of horses, indicating the dead men had been horse traders.

"There is nothing to put here for the owner of a fun-fair," Janos' brother Rajko lamented.

"They will know who he is," Michael reassured him.

Rosa was sobbing again, being comforted by her daughter who was hardly in better shape herself. Michael recognized the butcher, Benny Fiora, in attendance, and saw that Desmond Tanner had also come.

When the final prayers were read at the graveside, Michael sought

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out Rosa Kopular. "I must be moving on soon," he told her. "But I'm curious as to why you feel Janos was murdered."

She sighed, looking and acting far older than her years. "Come walk with me, Michael. Kalla will come with us, too. She can tell you."

They walked back the six blocks to the house, and although many followed none intruded on the widow's grief.

"First of all," Michael asked, "why should anyone want to kill Janos?"

"The fun-fair business can be very profitable."

"I find that difficult to believe, Rosa, unless there was some shady underground activity involved. What will you do with the fair now? Does Rajko want it?"

"No, my brother-in-law has always been more of a performer than a businessman. He would like nothing better than to sign a contract with that man Tanner and tour about Europe with clowns and bareback riders."

Michael turned to Kalla. "Tell me what happened the night your father died."

There were no tears from the young woman now—it was as if she had cried herself out. "Daddy had taken me with him, as he often did when he expected a busy night. The fun-fair had been a hundred miles away last week, and I was happy to have him back here. He spent the first day watching my uncle decide on the locations for the rides. They prided themselves on their House of Horrors, which they'd designed themselves. There was a great deal of Indian mythology in it, and the children loved it."

"Tell me about this chair swing he was on."

"All the fun-fairs have them. The motor is in the center part and the thing operates much like an upside-down carousel. The customers sit in tubular chairs suspended by chains from above. When the ride starts turning, the chairs are propelled outward by the speed. It's quite exciting and can seem very dangerous, but it actually turns no faster than a carousel."

"Did your father often ride it?"

"No—" She hesitated, looking to her mother.

"I told you before," Rosa said. "He may have had a drink, but he was not drunk."

"You weren't there."

"Sometimes he would ride on the Spinner—that's what we called it—just to make certain it was safe."

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Kalla seemed to accept her mother's explanation. "There were some nearby trees," she said. "He was afraid the riders might hit a limb. I think that's why he went up in it himself. He wanted to try it before he let the customers on."

"And did he hit a limb?"

"No," Rosa said firmly. "He was hurled out of his seat and fell to the ground some distance away. They said he died of a broken neck, but I saw the blood on his shirt."

"Blood?"

"Tell him what you heard, Kalla."

Kalla looked up into Michael's eyes. "I heard a single gunshot, just before he fell."

While Janos' family and friends gathered back at the house, Michael journeyed down to Udine's city offices to speak with the closest person they had to a coroner. His name was Dr. Panfilo and he had signed the death certificate. Short and bald, with thick glasses and a goatee, he reminded Michael of the college professors who appeared on Romanian television to reassure everyone that better days were coming.

"Yes, the Gypsy's body was brought here," he assured Michael. "I examined it personally."

"I'm acting for the family, Doctor. They're not satisfied with the stated cause of death."

"A broken neck, that's what did it. The body was badly bruised from the force of the fall. The neck lacerations were especially noticeable."

"His daughter was at the scene. She thinks she heard a shot—"

"Perhaps thunder."

"Was there rain that night?"

"No, but there could have been a storm in the distance."

Michael decided Dr. Panfilo was far from reliable. "She also saw blood. Could that have been from a distant storm?"

"The fall cracked some ribs as well. One of them punctured the skin and caused the bleeding. There was not a great deal because he died almost instantly. He lost some teeth when he hit the ground, too. There would have been bleeding from that."

"What about a bullet wound, Doctor?"

Panfilo shook his head emphatically. "There was no bullet wound."

When Michael left the building a few minutes later, he spotted

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a blond man on a motorcycle across the square. The man gunned his cycle to life and proceeded to follow at a distance, or so it seemed.

Michael went next to the funeral director who'd embalmed Janos' body and prepared it for burial. There, too, he was assured there'd been no bullet wound. It seemed certain that if Kalla had heard a shot that night, it was unrelated to her father's fall. He would have to tell Rosa there was no evidence of murder or any other irregularity.

Still, he wondered why the young man on the motorcycle continued to follow him.

Michael had decided to remain one more night in Udine before moving on. After dinner with the Kopular family, he overheard Rajko say he would be driving out to the site of the fun-fair to make certain everything was in order. He turned to Michael and said, "We kept it closed for the funeral, but I expect we'll reopen this weekend."

"Will you be running it?"

"Only until Rosa can arrange for a buyer," Rajko answered. "Would you like to come with me tonight?"

His car was a battered old hulk that nevertheless managed to cover the miles adequately. As they drove north out of the city for about ten miles, Rajko reminisced about growing up with Janos. "I remember when we got our first job with that little circus. It was a good life in those days, traveling through southern Europe, opening in a new town each week."

"Whatever happened to the girl you had then?"

Rajko shrugged. "She left me for an acrobat."

Presently the trucks and equipment of Kopular's Fun-Fair came into view, clustered in an empty meadow between two stands of large trees. There were all the usual attractions of such a fair, most of them obviously handmade by the Kopular brothers and other Gypsies. Michael strolled by the fortune-telling booths and the shell games, the scales for guessing weight, and the small carousel built onto the back of a truck. Over to one side were the trailers and campers in which the family traveled and lived when the fun-fair was on the road. Then there were the main attractions—the House of Horrors and the Spinner.

The evening breeze blowing against its canvas sides made the Spinner seem in motion even as it sat sleeping in the field, its chain-supported metal chairs clunking as they touched each other in the wind. The whole thing was twenty-five or thirty feet high, and Mi-

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chael could imagine the two dozen chairs being propelled far out into the night when the ride was going at full speed.

An old Gypsy he'd seen at the funeral appeared from one of the trailers and walked toward them carrying a .22 rifle. He immediately put it down when he recognized Rajko.

"This is Pedro Zamur," Rajko said. "He has been with us for years." Zamur muttered a few words and shook hands with Michael. "He runs the Spinner when we're open and lives here the rest of the time, guarding the place."

"Against what?" Michael asked.

"These rides are valuable. Rival Gypsy families have been known to steal them. That's what the rifle is for."

Michael turned to Zamur. "Were you operating the Spinner when Janos fell from it?"

The old man nodded a bit sheepishly, with downcast eyes. He started muttering again, and Michael asked him to speak more clearly. "I did nothing wrong," he repeated. "The Spinner was not going too fast."

The hanging seats were of tubular metal, like lawn chairs, and had wicker backs and bottoms. Michael examined a few, noting the thin leather safety belts that were the passengers' only restraint. "Did Janos have his fastened?" he asked.

The old Gypsy shrugged. "Maybe, maybe not. He only went up to be sure the seats would clear the tree limbs. He may not have fastened it."

"An accident, surely," a voice behind them said. Michael recognized the British accent before he turned to see Desmond Tanner in the gathering darkness.

"What brings you here?" Rajko asked.

"I was driving by and saw the lights. I knew you were closed earlier and wondered who was here."

Michael stepped forward. "You said you were here when the accident happened. Was the Spinner operating at a safe speed?"

"It seemed to be, until Janos was thrown out of it."

"How many others were on the ride at the time?"

Old Zamur answered. "No one else. Mr. Kopular went up alone to be sure it was safe."

"Did he always do that after the ride was set up?"

"Often," Rajko answered. "My brother was a perfectionist."

Michael looked up at the squat tower of steel and canvas. "Is the ride in the same position as when the accident happened?"

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"It is," Zamur insisted. "I haven't dared start it since the tragedy."

Michael hoisted himself into one of the metal seats. "Then I'm going for a ride. Get this thing started."

Rajko and the others were startled. "It could be dangerous," Rajko warned. "If there's a defect—"

"Then maybe I'll discover it." Michael buckled the leather belt across his lap. "Start the motor."

Old Zamur looked to Rajko for confirmation. The scowling man was still for a moment, perhaps seeing again his brother hurtling to the earth. Then, reluctantly, he gave a nod. Zamur walked to the control panel and activated the motor, moving the control lever slowly to the right to increase the speed. Michael felt his chair begin to move and lifted his feet from the ground.

Each chair was suspended by four chains from the rotating metal beams above. Michael got a good grip on the chains as the speed picked up and the chairs were propelled farther out into the night. The first time around, he worried about the limbs of the nearest tree, which he could barely see in the glow of lights from below. But the branches were a good ten feet away from the farthest reach of the chairs and there was no danger from them.

"All right," he called out to Zamur, "you can bring me down now! I've seen enough!"

As the Spinner came to a halt, he unsnapped the safety belt and jumped to the ground. "It seems to be working well," he told Rajko. "Somehow he mustn't have fastened the belt." He moved around the circle of chairs, examining each of the safety belts in turn, but none seemed defective. As he neared the end of the inspection, he was aware that Desmond Tanner had come up beside him.

"That was a dangerous stunt," the Englishman said. "You might have gotten yourself killed."

"You think so? I hung on."

"You should be heading back to Romania soon. It's safer there."

Michael looked up from his task. "What sort of advice is that?"

"Wise advice."

Michael walked away from Tanner, still not certain if a threat was implied. "We can go back now," he told Rajko. "There's nothing more to be seen here."

Driving back to the city, Rajko seemed to echo his thoughts about the Englishman. "I don't know what he's up to. We have no acts he could use in a circus. When she was feeling up to it, Rosa used to

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come along with the fun-fair and tell fortunes, but Gargantua doesn't need another Gypsy with a deck of cards."

"Might he want you out of business for some reason?"

"Does an elephant want an ant out of business? I'm surprised he even knew of our existence."

A motorcycle passed them on the highway, traveling too fast for Michael to see the driver. "Do you know any young, long-haired men who ride motorcycles?"

Rajko laughed. "A hundred of them! You can see the cycles parked along our street every day of the week."

"This one has blond hair and a moustache."

"That sounds like Al Lizza, one of Kalla's boy friends. He was in the funeral procession, but you may not have recognized him without his motorcycle."

"A Rom?"

"He told Kalla his mother was one of us, but who knows? Why does he interest you?"

"It's just a loose end," Michael said. "I think I should speak with him before I leave tomorrow."

Michael stayed overnight with the Kopulars again, sleeping this time in the sitting room where Janos's body had been laid out the night before. In the morning he found Kalla making breakfast. "My mother wanted to stay in bed a little longer," she explained.

"Of course." He noticed she'd uncovered the big mirror in the hall and the others around the house. Life was returning to normal.

"Will you be leaving today?"

"That's my plan. But there's one thing I want to do first."

"What's that?"

"Talk to your boy friend—Al Lizza."

"How do you know about him?"

"I think he was following me around the city yesterday, after the funeral."

"He wouldn't do that."

"I want to ask him. Will you see him today?"

"I might." She brought him a cup of strong Italian coffee. "Oh, my mother asked if you could bring Georgio back from the butcher's before you go. It's not important—I can always get him later."

"No trouble at all. I'll go down there right after breakfast."

As he set off for Fiora's butcher shop a half hour later, Michael saw the familiar blond youth on his motorcycle. "Lizza," he called

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out, "I've been looking for you!" The youth gunned the cycle and would have taken off down the street but Michael called to him again. "Lizza! Come here!"

This time the boy made a wide circle in the street and coasted up next to Michael. "How do you know my name?" he asked.

"Kalla told me. Why have you been following me around?"

"I haven't." Then he changed his mind. "All right, I have. I was worried about Kalla."

"*I'm* certainly not going to harm her."

"You're going to take her away," the youth replied sullenly.

"What gave you that crazy idea? I'm merely an old friend of her father's who stopped by to see him. Unfortunately, I was only in time for his funeral."

Lizza let out his breath, looking grim. "Then it must have been that man Tanner after all."

"You'd better tell me what you know."

Lizza glanced around as if to make certain they wouldn't be overheard. "Two weeks ago, Kalla heard her father and her uncle arguing. Janos said something about this man coming to town to break up their family and that he wouldn't let it happen. The next week they were both away touring with the fun-fair, but when they returned they had this man Tanner with them. Kalla thought he was the one they'd argued about, but then her father was killed and you showed up. I was afraid you'd do something, take her away."

"Why would I do that?"

"I don't know," he said, looking away.

"Do you imagine she was somehow involved in her father's death?"

"Of course not!"

"You have to tell me what I could possibly have done to break up the family."

"I—" he seemed at a loss for words "—I've heard that Gypsy families sometimes arrange marriages. And you are a Gypsy king."

Michael laughed. "And a happily married one. If you think I came to Udine seeking a twenty-year-old bride, you are mistaken."

The youth relaxed visibly. "I just thought—"

"Forget it." Michael gave his shoulder a squeeze. "I'll be gone in a few hours and she'll still be here. I wish you both every happiness."

"I—thank you." Lizza gunned the motorcycle to life and took off down the street, leaving Michael still smiling.

Fiora's shop was just opening for the day's business and the

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butcher greeted Michael with a smile. "Hello, there. I'll bet you've come for Georgio."

"That's right."

"I was going to bring him up to the house last night but I decided Rosa would send for him when she wanted him. My son's out in the back yard with him. Go right through there."

The butcher's son was a friendly eight-year-old named Lenny. Michael found him rolling in the dirt with Georgio, having the time of his life. "I'm sorry to take him away," Michael apologized.

"That's all right," the boy said. "Mrs. Kopular lets me come and play with him." He stood up and started to brush himself off.

"You were at the fun-fair with your father the other night when Mr. Kopular died," Michael said, broaching the subject gently.

"Yes. When I first heard he was dead, I thought the snake might have killed him."

"Your father said there was a snake."

"A big one, all coiled up! I was walking in the woods and I almost stepped on it in the dark."

"What did you do then?" Michael asked, bending to attach the rope to the dog's neck.

"I ran out and told Mr. Kopular. He promised to kill it and that's when my father said we had to go home."

"Is that why you thought the snake had killed Janos Kopular? Because you sent him after it?"

The boy looked puzzled. "No, not that Mr. Kopular. I told the other one—his brother."

"I see," Michael said.

At the Kopular home, he delivered the leash into Kalla's hand. "Here's Georgio, good as new."

"Thank you, Mr. Vlado."

"And I had that little talk with your boy friend."

"Al?"

"Yes. Everything's fine."

She smiled at him. "You'll be going, then?"

"As soon as I have a word with your uncle. Is he here?"

She shook her head. "He's gone up to the fun-fair with my mother. They want to reopen it tonight."

"Ah! I really should say goodbye to them both, but I have no way of getting there."

"I have the other car. I could drive you."

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"Would you? I'd appreciate it."

He remembered the route from the previous evening when Rajko had been driving, but the girl had a better car and cut ten minutes from the journey. As soon as they pulled into the familiar meadow, he saw Rosa and her brother-in-law standing with old Zamur. They were studying the Spinner ride, perhaps debating whether to reopen it this evening. The sign over the House of Horrors had already been lit.

"I came to say goodbye," Michael told them.

"Would you want to help us out here tonight?" Rosa asked. "I'm going to be working my old fortune-telling booth."

"I'm afraid I have other places I must visit," Michael said. Seeing Rajko and Zamur move away to begin setting up some of the booths for the evening, he turned to Kalla. "Those trailers over there—which one does your uncle use?"

"The red one at the end. Why do you ask?"

"It's nothing important."

"Do you want me to drive you back now?"

"In a few minutes," Michael said.

He strode deliberately toward the red trailer without looking back. The door was unlocked and he entered at once. Through the window he could see Rajko break off his conversation with the old man and hurry after him.

Drawers, closet— No, it would be in a safer place.

Under the mattress, of course!

He was starting to lift it when Rajko burst through the door. "What are you doing in my trailer? What—"

Michael pulled the coiled bullwhip from its hiding place and threw it on the floor between them. "Rajko, like the biblical Cain you have slain your brother! I must know why you did this terrible thing."

Rajko's face had turned ashen. "Who told you such a thing?"

"The children, Rajko. The daughter of your victim, who thought she heard a shot. The son of the butcher, who thought he saw a snake."

"I—"

"The shot Kalla heard was the crack of this whip, and the coiled snake Lenny saw was the whip you had hidden earlier in among the trees. When Janos boarded the Spinner for a test ride, as he often did in a new location, you disappeared into the dark woods, retrieved the whip, and climbed the tree nearest to the amusement

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ride. There, as your brother sped past you in his chair, you struck out with this twenty-foot whip, catching him by the throat and hurtling him to his death. It was no great stunt for you, who used to flick lighted cigarettes from the lips of pretty girls. And in the dark no one saw."

"I deny—"

"Deny all you want, Rajko. It was you who set up the Spinner and the other rides, you who positioned it at exactly the right distance from those trees. It was you who argued with your brother two weeks ago about breaking up the family. The coroner told me Janos had lacerations on his neck, but he thought they were from the fall. I know you did it, I just don't know why."

Rajko Kopular sank to the bed and buried his face in his hands. "He was jealous of me," he murmured. "Jealous, all his life! I had a skill with my bullwhip he could never possess. Desmond Tanner saw me perform once and sought me out. He wanted me to join the Gargantua Circus with a bullwhip act. I told Janos about it and he was furious. That's why we fought."

"You killed him over that?"

"There'd been something in the past, something he knew about. He threatened to make it public if I joined Gargantua."

"Tell me, Rajko. There are no more secrets."

Rajko looked up at Michael with pleading eyes. "You asked me what happened to the girl who was my partner in the act. I lied when I said she ran off with an acrobat. She was going to, and we fought over it. I hit her and—she died. It was a terrible accident. Janos helped me bury her body and we told everyone she'd run off. That was what he threatened to reveal. But I was fed up with his jealous threats, fed up with the way he treated me all these years. I was his partner in the fun-fair but it was all in his and Rosa's name. I got nothing, even if he died. That was his punishment for my crime. But I'd been punished long enough. I decided to leave anyway, and to make sure he would never tell the police about what happened to the girl."

"It's gotten you nowhere," Michael said. "Now you have two murders to answer for."

"Will you tell them?"

"I have no choice. Your brother was my friend."

He left the trailer and went out to join Rosa and Kalla. They were busy setting up the fortune-telling booth for the evening crowd.

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Across the way, Pedro Zamur was making adjustments on the Spinner.

"Have you finished speaking with Rajko?" Rosa asked.

"I've finished."

Another car was stopping and he saw that it was Desmond Tanner. "Where's Rajko?" he asked them.

"He's in his trailer," Michael said.

Tanner nodded and set off across the meadow, past the Spinner and the carousel and the amusement booths to the red trailer. Michael watched him go, knowing that he would have to speak now, and that what he told Rosa and Kalla would wear down his heart.

DETECTIVERSE

MOOT QUESTIONS

by SAM YOUNG

"Ever been up before me?" asked the judge.
"Try to remember if you can."
The drunk stood swaying before him:
"What time d'you get up?" asked the man.

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a *NEW* short story by

VIRGINIA LAYEFSKY

On such short notice, she thought she did well. Because today was sudden, a sudden shock, a surprise, something that came upon her entirely without warning. She thought she would be at the Chili Bowl today as usual to wipe off the counter with her same blue-and-white rag, hearing the same country music on the radio and the same semen-stained local gossip, with the ocean all wrapped in mist and clams out of sight across the highway like it always was.

We first published Virginia Layefsky in EQMM with her second published story, "Statement of the Accused," in the June 1961 issue. Thirty years has been a long time to wait for another story, but we think you will agree it was well worth it . . .

THIS PLACE BELONGS TO YOU

by VIRGINIA LAYEFSKY

It's late. The last drunk from the Blue Nest has just shouted his way down our road, up to his knees in moonlight and falling over shadows as he goes. I can tell by the silence he is in the woods by now, on his way to one of the mobile homes down by the river. With You to guide him through the trees, nothing will happen to him. He will get back safe and be able to smash up something and beat his wife before he goes to sleep. You'll see to it because this place belongs to You. I know by the way the trees grow all around, so close I'll probably wake some night with one rammed down my throat, branches and all, so that leaves will be the last thing I see before I die.

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This mobile home is Yours. I can tell by the cat hair that grows inside my toaster, so that all my bread has fur, and by that enormous spider I found in a corner of the cupboard. As I lie here now in the middle of the night, I can hear You in the woods outside as the Silence that withers leaves, poisons toadstools, brings hurt to small night things, and creates the darkness.

There must be a place in Your darkness for me because I have no other place to live. I am all alone. The other girls my age are settled down by now, deep in the kind of trouble we have around here. Some already have two or three little criers in second-hand snowsuits and tiny rubber boots to trail after them wherever they go. I have no one. I am Medusa, I am Quasimodo. No local male will ever ask me to share his bed or help spend his Welfare check at the Blue Nest. Nothing but cats will ever trail at my heels and I never look in mirrors any more.

But all the same, I am not without value because I am not like the others here. I am literate, I am intelligent. So You can see the danger I'm in, You can understand the terror I feel when I wake up alone among all these trees in the middle of the night. All I have is my job at the Chili Bowl, my mother's mobile home, and two cats, one pregnant. Left to myself, without Your help, You see what I must become—inevitably, horribly—as if this place that breeds weirdness and solitary despair needed one more cat-keeping crazy!

You are the cupboard and I am the spider that must crawl into Your darkness in order to stay alive. And the door is already open, isn't it?

It was You sent that pickup truck with the Confederate flag as a bumper sticker, with the heavy-metal rock that blasted out of it and that pair of tight jeans with the small butt and handsome bulge to drive it and carry off my mother so that I could be alone. It was You sent today as well, to see what I could do with it.

And on such short notice, I think I did well. Because today was sudden, a sudden shock, a surprise, something that came upon me entirely without warning. I never expected You to send Ed a bad pain to keep him in bed this morning. I thought I would be at the Chili Bowl today as usual to wipe off the counter with my same blue-and-white rag, hearing the same country music on the radio and the same semen-stained local gossip, with the ocean all wrapped in mist and clams out of sight across the highway like it always is.

Even when I knew the day would be different because the Chili Bowl was closed, I never thought how different it would be, or how

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final, or that this was the day the door of the cupboard would open for me to creep inside once and for all so that I could be safe forever. Because, You know, the morning seemed so ordinary. There was the bus, I caught the one that leaves here early, that wanders through the Indian reservation and then along the ocean until it gets to Westcott midmorning. There was the rain that came down hard and steady like it does—and had, for a week.

There was the Chili Bowl, which we passed on the bus—a shabby little box at the highway's edge with the empty counter inside and the Closed sign already crooked in the gale that blew off the ocean. After that there was only fog and rain. It was like it always was and I didn't think about any of these things. I was too pleased with my day off and that I was on my way to Westcott where the library is, with the cafe opposite where they make the good chicken-salad sandwiches, to care about anything else.

After the Chili Bowl, there was nothing to see outside the window, so I stopped looking out and looked at the other passengers instead. There were three besides me: Pat McKay, a normal person who never rides our bus; little Selma, like a crazy white mouse with her long pink nose stuck out from the hood of the fake-fur parka she wears year round; and an Indian woman I never saw before, hugely fat with a handsome, evil, alcoholic face.

I only nodded to Selma, because if I had spoken she would have sat down beside me. Then, with my face and her parka, we would have been two local crazies, side by side on the same seat—an idea I couldn't abide. As it was, she sat down toward the back and I had a seat to myself.

Pat McKay got on last, for the same reason probably, to make sure I wouldn't sit beside her. She gave me a smile afterward, though, one of the McKay smiles that are all straightforwardness and good humor and democracy. No one can call Pat stuck-up or unattractive, either, because at forty-five she isn't sick or fat or all messed up some way like the other women her age are around here. Pat is slim, she wears designer jeans. She's also pleasant and known to be a sociable person, though not, of course, with people like Selma and me. We may be ignorant out here in the woods, but we have our social order all the same, like anyplace else, and the McKays are our aristocracy. Gary owns the new supermarket at Westcott, so they aren't poor like the rest of us, but enviable and trouble-free: glamorous people who go to places like Las Vegas and San Francisco.

They live in a big ranch-style house that's elaborately fenced to

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keep the woods out. Their furniture is new and paid for. It sits on shining floors. They have all the major appliances. Their house bursts at the seams with things other people want but can't have, like microwaves, food processors, trash compactors, and home computers. They have cathedral ceilings and a two-car garage, they have cedar-lined walk-in closets. They have a family room.

And it is here, when I come to the family room at the McKays, that all irony on my part disappears, dissolved into a yearning that is somber, powerful, and sad, that is as painful as being in love and as unreasonable as it is insatiable. *You* understand why. You know about the family room—how famous it was when I was in high school, how enormous and substantial it seemed to people like us who lived in beach shacks and mobile homes and cabins in the woods. With that great stone fireplace filled with blazing logs at one end of it and all the other things there that no one else could dream of having: the genuine old-fashioned jukebox that lit up with colored lights and really played, the pool table, the stereo system, the couches, the Indian rugs. How perfectly it disregarded our isolation and made it nothing. How completely it set itself against the sound of endless rain on endless leaves that told us over and over how bored and poor we were and drew us close into its rude and lavish warmth.

You recall it was built by Gary for his sons Derek, Sean, and Scott, all famous jocks in high school. And that it was wonderful and just what he intended it to be: the place where all the action was, the only place to be. Everybody in high school went there. It was where, with smiles and the shaking out of long hair, with boasting that was discreet and indiscreet, all our sexual attachments and social alliances were formed. It was where we went to find out What Went On, thus continuing the intricate social history begun each day at school, which was all that really mattered in our lives, all that really counted. It was where all the laughter and excitement and dancing was. It was, in a word, meant to be—Paradise. And now, if You listen closely, You will hear drops of blood from my heart fall distinctly onto the floor of this mobile home, because it was, it *was*.

All the bright particular stars of our high school's heaven shone nightly there. Heroes like Michael Hightree, who was Indian, but such a quarterback as made everyone overlook it. And Johnny Lund, who was blond and beautiful and captain of the football team, who already had an athletic scholarship to Northwestern and went steady with Trudy Sorenson, our Homecoming Queen, in his senior

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year but broke up with her the day after the Senior Prom. Sharee Odegard with bitch-green eyes in her white face, the whore for the football team, whose mother was president of the P.T.A. while mine spent most of her time at the Blue Nest. Floyd Rey, our fat boy who made everybody laugh. And all the others, lots of others, people from other schools, people from all over, from as far away as Secumseh or Charityville—everybody.

All the famous lovers. Couples like Mark Yule and Hildy Laurence or Chris Larson and Carol Leander: the ones who would marry as soon as they graduated, who had always been in love only with each other, who had Their Look Between Themselves and Their Songs—who only danced with each other, who walked linked together and were the proprietors of all the thousand things that made up a long and notable intimacy.

We cherished these lovers. Not yet married nor bred, not yet defaced by hopelessness or failure, still radiant, they belonged to all of us. We protected them in our minds, we gave them beauty and significance because we knew they were our only legends, all the authentic romance we were likely to have: sole evidence of the precious, necessary, intangible things that kept us from being obliterated by the harsh facts of local life. They were our common Valentine and within the cut-out cardboard heart of the local imagination they shone, beloved and two-dimensional as Saints: innocent and resplendent.

Of all the lovers, Chris and Carol were most famous. Chris was tall and silent—a dark, serious boy, good athlete, good student, too possessive of Carol but well liked all the same, one of the popular people. And Carol was beautiful, such a beautiful girl, a beautiful girl who loved to dance and laugh. As I lie here in the dark and listen to the dry rasp of the spider's legs against the shelf paper in the cupboard, I see them now behind my eyes in an inner landscape of my own, all loveliness and grace.

There, then, were the football stars and the legendary lovers, the popular people, the potent ones who ate Pat's turkey sandwiches on Thanksgiving night after the Game and danced under her mistletoe at Christmas, who came out of the darkness of a summer night from a party on the beach that was all leaping flames, burned hotdogs, and sandy sex to blink, bedazzled in the brightness of the family room. These were the people who frequented our own place of enchantment, our Hall of Mirrors, our palace of Versailles; who rolled up to it in carriages and were invited to the ball. And I? I was the

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peasant who stood in the rain outside the gates with a bundle of twigs on my back and watched them go inside.

I am certain You realize I was never in the family room at the McKays, that I only know about these things from hearsay, that in all my years in high school I was never there. Never. Not once. Not once.

Pat McKay knows me, though, so once we were safely seated she leaned forward to tell me how her car wouldn't start this morning and wasn't that the limit on a day like this and how was I? I said I was fine. We didn't talk after that. We sailed on in the fog and rain and I looked out the window. The Indian woman slept loudly with her head thrown back and her mouth open. Selma sucked her fingers and stared down at her purse in her lap. Pat read a magazine. After a while, we passed the cranberry bogs and the oyster farms and the chimney of the house that burned down last spring, and then we were in Westcott.

There are tricks to living alone. One of them is never to hurry what you're doing. If I had gone directly to the library this morning, for instance, and then came out to have my lunch, my day off would have been over. I would have caught the one-fifteen and been back in my mother's mobile home by three o'clock and had to hear the rain on the roof and feel the trees stare in at me through the windows for hours before it was time to go to sleep.

So first, before I went to the library, I went down the hill to the Westcott Amusement Pier, that long arm of games, thrills, and curious wonders that stretches away from the town right out into the ocean. That is Your country in the summer and in all ways wildly at war with the careful little houses that ride the surrounding hills. It was deserted today without the sun, with all the summer crowds gone elsewhere and only seagulls left to scream and bicker and circle in fierce white clouds or perch on pilings above the wash of unstable, oily water.

The fog lay in wait for me out on the pier, cold and intimate as an amorous corpse, eager to feel my face and get into my hair. Behind its still, white face I heard the deep voice of the ocean speak but I couldn't understand what it said or see the water.

On the pier, the carnival was over. All the bright painted doors to the Skee-Ball and Bingo and Ring Toss, red, blue, yellow, were closed. Away up over my head the roller coaster and the ferris wheel loomed like prehistoric beasts, dead now that it was winter.

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I walked down the pier, close to store fronts, with my hood up to shield myself from the rain and wind. There were a few sailors from the Navy base at Westcott—they walked as aimlessly as I, with no particular place to go, sorrier to be in Westcott than I was, because they probably didn't know about the library or the chicken-salad sandwiches at the cafe like I did. We passed one another but they paid me no attention. I've always been invisible to the opposite sex.

I found the only gift shop that was open on the pier. It was good to be inside where it was warm and bright after the mysterious damp blindness on the pier, so I loitered there. I refused to hurry, I took my time. I looked carefully at salt and pepper shakers shaped like female breasts and at a china frog on a toilet stamped WESTCOTT. I held an amazingly beautiful shell from the South Seas in my hand and thought how strange that it cost less money to buy than the frog. I looked at everything there but bought nothing because I came to this shop often. I had seen all these things before.

They must have passed me on their way down the pier. Perhaps as I stood there with the shell in my hands inside the shop, they walked by outside, and this was when the moment that You sent me came to life. Or maybe not. Maybe not then but later, as they stood together at the end of the pier in the ocean's arms, with disaster being foretold in the hoarse bass roar of the water below and the gulls screamed warnings—maybe that was when the moment You sent me, curled up perhaps like an embryo in the stink and rot of seaweed under the pier, breathed itself into life, lifted its blind face, and set itself to happen. I don't know. I only know that as they stood there together, they were already Yours and therefore mine. Your astonishing gift to me that I never expected to get today—something of my very own to play with and do what I liked with. And so how else could I see them but with a tenderness that was part ferocious? Or look at them with anything but the infatuated gaze of the cat who hides and watches birds, all unaware?

They never saw me as I left the shop. They were across the Boardwalk on the other side, on their way somewhere, to her apartment probably. They were oblivious of me, entirely taken up with each other. A brooding simplicity surrounded them so that they seemed mindless and innocent, like members of another species, beautiful beasts that were ready to mate, no one in their world besides themselves. And although they never touched as they walked, I felt in my own body how much they wanted each other, how urgently they

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needed to be locked together on a bed somewhere with walls around it.

He was light-haired and smiling, a tall young sailor. She was beautiful as ever. I hadn't seen her since she moved to Westcott or been invited to her wedding, though I heard that by local standards it was an elaborate one: white dress, wedding cake, bridesmaids, and all. And so soon after graduation that the dance music from the Senior Prom was still in the eyes and hair of the wedding party.

Later I heard there was trouble. Nothing unusual—just the simple, terrible kind we have around here. Chris couldn't find a job. The one-room shack they moved into after the wedding was nothing really but a door, a window, and a musty smell with an outhouse stuck behind: a dim green little old ancient place away back out among the trees. And they were there alone together night and day, day and night. Then Carol got pregnant and miscarried and before long the legendary lovers were like all the rest of us. We heard about the fierce quarrels they had and the jealous fits Chris took whenever Carol so much as went to the Chili Bowl or the general store to be away somewhere for a while without him.

It was You closed down the shake mills forever here, so that we all looked for work and couldn't find any. It was You made Chris Larsen look for work for months until he got so strange and desperate that an uncle of his who owns Grumbaums, the appliance store in Westcott, hired him out of pity to sell washers and driers and the Larsens moved away from here to Westcott.

Nobody thought about them after that. In fact, I myself forgot all about them until this morning when the rain drove everybody in the world inside, when I should have been inside, too, at the Chili Bowl and not on Westcott Pier—when, but for You, it should have been safe for Carol to walk with her sailor, passionate and invisible.

And now, just here, if I go over what happened after I saw them together today, it is only to indulge myself. I understand that You already know all about it, but the pleasure I feel as I dwell on each detail is so excruciating that I almost find it impossible to deny it to myself, so, once again, for one more time:

I followed them off the pier. And I knew the building they entered must be where she lived—not because it looked like a place where something tragic or violent would happen (I know the places that most belong to You are never marked) but because it was small, odd, painted a strange color, the sort of place that would have cheap and inconvenient apartments inside it that only very young couples

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who could afford nothing better would consent to live in. I checked the mailboxes anyway, though, to be sure, and their name was on one of them.

I gave them five minutes to get upstairs and get their clothes off. Then I found a telephone down by the pier and called Grumbaums. Chris answered. I hid myself behind a hoarse, common voice with a southern accent. "Chris?"

And when he answered yes, I said, "You better get on home right now 'cause right this very minute the Navy is in your bed, screwin' your wife."

Then I broke the connection.

The fog was there before me when I came back to my place in the doorway of a small apartment house across the street from theirs. It hung solid and solemn before my eyes like a curtain about to rise on a play I had written myself with myself as sole audience. The end of my play was still uncertain, but as I waited the thought of what was most likely to happen was unspeakably satisfying to me—unbearably exciting. I was filled with the pleasurable terror an incendiary must feel once the match is laid to the pile of rubbish, before the building bursts into flames. It was wonderfully powerful to be what makes things happen and my heart rose on fierce, ragged wings for the first time in my life at the thought that this was me.

Then the star of my piece appeared. Chris strode rapidly up the hill from the pier on those long legs of his. He came up the other side of the street and passed downstage before my white-fog curtain: larger than life, fated and mythic, like someone in a ballad. He moved so fiercely I could almost hear the great breaths he drew. And I saw his face. It was made up for the part, it was perfect, with nothing left in it but jealousy and rage—a mask as powerful as it was horrifying, terrible and beautiful as a conflagration, something that clearly belonged to You.

I supposed he would take the gun his uncle must have kept in the store for robbers, and I was right. I saw something in his hand, hidden inside his jacket as he passed. Then the white curtain fell between us and he was gone. I waited in the doorway until I heard three shots, then I went to the library.

Word caught up with me there, as I sat at my usual table and read a bit in each of the books I'd chosen to see which I would take home with me. I heard excitement at the front desk, questions and an-

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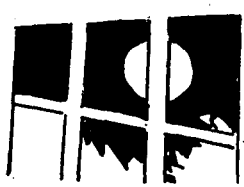
swers, exclamations, as someone told the librarian murder had been done, just then, down the street—a shooting with three people dead and the police there now.

After I heard, I put my book down quietly and went into the Ladies because I knew no one must see what I was about to do. Then, alone in there, I stood face to face with the large mirror. I thought of those long legs of his, how comically they pumped to propel him up the hill from the pier and about legendary lovers and how gunshots sound and then I watched myself laugh in the mirror without making any sound.

It's late. The rain has begun again. I hear it tap lightly on my roof with a thousand restless fingers as I lie here. I think about what it would be like to have a face like Carol Leander's, her eyes and nose and mouth, her long shining hair, all those things that are gone now, shot away and marred by blood, fit for nothing but the earth. I wonder what it would be like to be a legendary lover in the golden age and to have laughed and danced in the family room at the McKays—but then I stop, because all these things are over and done with now. Already the images are faded and ghostly, a bit unreal. What most excites me now is to lie here in the dark and seriously consider the nature and the art of Creative Evil. I think about myself and about today and I grow cold with pleasure. I feel the anticipation of a born painter who, for the first time in his life, has a brush in his hand.

I think You must agree that there is real talent here, that my native gifts are considerable. I feel that what happened today is only the beginning, the smallest hint of things to come. With time, with You to help me, I should be able to do something for You someday that will be truly significant, something distinguished, something memorable and on a much larger scale.



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a not-to-be-missed Sherlock Holmes pastiche by

ANTHONY BURGESS

"Come, Watson," Holmes cried. "I have been trying in my own damnably amateurish way to make sense of Sarasate's own latest composition. Now the master himself will hand me the key. The key of D major."

"Shall I leave my medical bag here?"

"No, Watson. I don't doubt that you have some gentle anaesthetic there to ease you through the more tedious phases of the recital." He smiled as he said this, but Watson felt abashed at his all too accurate appraisal of his attitude to the sonic art . . .

MURDER TO MUSIC

by ANTHONY BURGESS

Sir Edwin Etheridge, the eminent specialist in tropical diseases, had had the kindness to invite me to share with him the examination of a patient of his in the Marylebone area. It seemed to Sir Edwin that this patient, a young man who had never set foot outside England, was suffering from an ailment known as *latah*—common enough in the Malay archipelago but hitherto unknown, so far as the clinical records, admittedly not very reliable, could advise, in the temperate clime of northern Europe. I was able to confirm Sir Edwin's tentative diagnosis: the young man was morbidly suggestible, imitating any action he either saw or heard described, and was, on my entrance into his bedroom, exhausting himself with the conviction that he had been metamorphosed into a bicycle. The disease is incurable but intermittent: it is of psychical rather than nervous provenance, and can best be eased by repose, solitude, opiates, and tepid malt drinks. As I strolled down Mary-

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lebone Road after the consultation, it seemed to me the most natural thing in the world to turn into Baker Street to visit my old friend, lately returned, so the *Times* informed me, from some nameless assignment in Marrakesh. This, it later transpired, was the astonishing case of the Moroccan poisonous palmyra, of which the world is not yet ready to hear.

I found Holmes rather warmly clad for a London July day, in dressing gown, winter comforter, and a jewelled turban which, he was to inform me, was the gift of the mufti of Fez—donated in gratitude for some service my friend was not willing to specify. He was bronzed and clearly inured to a greater heat than our own, but not, except for the turban, noticeably exoticised by his sojourn in the land of the Mohammedan. He had been trying to breathe smoke through a hubble-bubble but had given up the endeavour. "The flavour of rose water is damnably sickly, Watson," he remarked, "and the tobacco itself of a mildness further debilitated by its long transit through these ingenious but ridiculous conduits." With evident relief he drew some of his regular cut from the Turkish slipper by the fireless hearth, filled his curved pipe, lighted it with a vesta, and then looked at me amiably. "You have been with Sir Edwin Etheridge," he said, "in, I should think, St. John's Wood Road."

"This is astonishing, Holmes," I gasped. "How can you possibly know?"

"Easy enough," puffed my friend. "St. John's Wood Road is the only London thoroughfare where deciduous redwood has been planted, and a leaf of that tree, prematurely fallen, adheres to the sole of your left boot. As for the other matter, Sir Edwin Etheridge is in the habit of sucking Baltimore mint lozenges as a kind of token prophylactic. You have been sucking one yourself. They are not on the London market, and I know of no other man who has them specially imported."

"You are quite remarkable, Holmes," I said.

"Nothing, my dear Watson. I have been perusing the *Times,* as you may have observed from its crumpled state on the floor—a womanish habit, I suppose, God bless the sex—with a view to informing myself on events of national import, in which, naturally enough, the enclosed world of Morocco takes little interest."

"Are there not French newspapers there?"

"Indeed, but they contain no news of events in the rival empire. I see we are to have a state visit from the young king of Spain."

"That would be his infant majesty Alfonso the Thirteenth," I some-

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what gratuitously amplified. "I take it that his mother the regent, the fascinating Maria Christina, will be accompanying him."

"There is much sympathy for the young monarch," Holmes said, "especially here. But he has his republican and anarchist enemies. Spain is in a state of great political turbulence. It is reflected even in contemporary Spanish music." He regarded his violin, which lay waiting for its master in its open case, and resined the bow lovingly. "The petulant little fiddle tunes I heard in Morocco day and night, Watson, need to be excised from my head by something more complex and civilised. One string only, and usually one note on one string. Nothing like the excellent Sarasate."

He began to play an air which he assured me was Spanish, though I heard in it something of Spain's Moorish inheritance, wailing, desolate, and remote. Then with a start Holmes looked at his turnip watch, a gift from the Duke of Northumberland. "Good heavens, we'll be late. Sarasate is playing this very afternoon at St. James's Hall." And he doffed his turban and robe and strode to his dressing room to habit himself more suitably for a London occasion. I kept my own counsel, as always, concerning my feelings on the subject of Sarasate and, indeed, on music in general. I lacked Holmes's artistic flair. As for Sarasate, I could not deny that he played wonderfully well for a foreign fiddler, but there was a smugness in the man's countenance as he played that I found singularly unattractive. Holmes knew nothing of my feelings and, striding in in his blue-velvet jacket with trousers of a light-clothed Mediterranean cut, a white shirt of heavy silk, and a black Bohemian tie carelessly knotted, he assumed in me his own anticipatory pleasure. "Come, Watson," he cried. "I have been trying in my own damnably amateurish way to make sense of Sarasate's own latest composition. Now the master himself will hand me the key. The key of D major," he added.

"Shall I leave my medical bag here?"

"No, Watson. I don't doubt that you have some gentle anaesthetic there to ease you through the more tedious phases of the recital." He smiled as he said this, but I felt abashed at his all too accurate appraisal of my attitude to the sonic art.

The hot afternoon seemed, to my fancy, to have succumbed to the drowsiness of the Middle Sea, as through Holmes's own inexplicable influence. It was difficult to find a cab and when we arrived at St. James's Hall the recital had already begun. When we had been granted the exceptional privilege of taking our seats at the back of

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the hall while the performance of an item was already in progress, I was quick enough myself to prepare for a Mediterranean siesta. The great Sarasate, then at the height of his powers, was fiddling away at some abstruse mathematics of Bach, to the accompaniment on the pianoforte of a pleasant-looking young man whose complexion proclaimed him to be as Iberian as the master. He seemed nervous, though not of his capabilities on the instrument. He glanced swiftly behind him towards the curtain which shut off the platform from the wings and passages of the administrative arcana of the hall, but then, as if reassured, returned wholeheartedly to his music. Meanwhile Holmes, eyes half shut, gently tapped on his right knee the rhythm of the intolerably lengthy equation which was engaging the intellects of the musically devout, among whom I remarked the pale red-bearded young Irishman who was making his name as a critic and a polemicist. I slept.

I slept, indeed, very soundly. I was awakened not by the music but by the applause, to which Sarasate was bowing with Latin extravagance. I glanced covertly at my watch to find that a great deal of music had passed over my sleeping brain; there must have been earlier applause to which my drowsy grey cells had proved impervious. Holmes apparently had not noted my somnolence or, perhaps noting it, had been too discreet to arouse me or, now, to comment on my boorish indifference to that art he adored.

"The work in question, Watson," he said, "is about to begin." And it began. It was a wild piece in which never fewer than three strings of the four were simultaneously in action, full of the rhythm of what I knew, from a brief visit to Granada, to be the *zapateado*. It ended with furious chords and a high single note that only a bat could have found euphonious. "Bravo," cried Holmes with the rest, vigorously clapping. And then the noise of what to me seemed excessive approbation was pierced by the crack of a single gunshot. There was smoke and the tang of a frying breakfast, and the young accompanist cried out. His head collapsed onto the keys of his instrument, producing a hideous jangle, and then the head, with its unseeing eyes and an open mouth from which blood relentlessly pumped in a galloping tide, raised itself and seemed to accuse the entire audience of a ghastly crime against nature. Then, astonishingly, the fingers of the right hand of the dying man picked at one note of the keyboard many times, following this with a seemingly delirious phrase of a few different notes which he repeated and would have continued to repeat if the rattle of death had not overtaken him. He slumped to

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the floor of the platform. The women in the audience screamed. Meanwhile, the master Sarasate clutched his valuable violin to his bosom—a Stradivarius, Holmes later was to inform me—as though that had been the target of the gunshot.

Holmes was, as ever, quick to act. "Clear the hall!" he shouted. The manager appeared, trembling and deathly pale, to add a feebler shout to the same effect. Attendants somewhat roughly assisted the horrified audience to leave. The red-bearded young Irishman nodded at Holmes as he left, saying something to the effect that it was as well that the delicate fingers of the amateur should anticipate the coarse questing paws of the Metropolitan professionals, adding that it was a bad business: that young Spanish pianist had promised well. "Come, Watson," said Holmes, striding towards the platform. "He has lost much blood but he may not be quite dead." But I saw swiftly enough that he was past any help that the contents of my medical bag could possibly provide. The rear of the skull was totally shattered.

Holmes addressed Sarasate in what I took to be impeccable Castilian, dealing every courtesy and much deference. Sarasate seemed to say that the young man, whose name was Gonzales, had served as his accompanist both in Spain and on foreign tours for a little over six months, that he knew nothing of his background though something of his ambitions as a solo artist and a composer, and that, to the master's knowledge, he had no personal enemies. Stay, though: there had been some rather unsavoury stories circulating in Barcelona about the adulterous activities of the young Gonzales, but it was doubtful if the enraged husband, or conceivably husbands, would have pursued him to London to effect so dire and spectacular a revenge. Holmes nodded distractedly, meanwhile loosening the collar of the dead man.

"A somewhat pointless procedure," I commented. Holmes said nothing. He merely peered at the lowest segment of the nape of the corpse's neck, frowned, then wiped one hand against the other while rising from a crouch back to his feet. He asked the sweating manager if the act of assassination had by any chance been observed, either by himself or by one of his underlings, or, failing that, if any strange visitant had, to the knowledge of the management, insinuated himself into the rear area of the hall, reserved exclusively for artists and staff and protected from the rear door by a former sergeant of marines, now a member of the corps of commissionaires. A horrid thought struck the manager at once, and, followed by Holmes and

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myself, he rushed down a corridor that led to a door which gave onto a side alley.

That door was unguarded for a very simple reason. An old man in the uniform trousers of the corps, though not, evidently because of the heat, the jacket, lay dead, the back of his grey head pierced with devilish neatness by a bullet. The assassin had then presumably effected an unimpeded transit to the curtains which separated the platform from the area of offices and dressing rooms.

"It is very much to be regretted," said the distraught manager, "that no other of the staff was present at the rear, though if one takes an excusably selfish view of the matter, it is perhaps not to be regretted. Evidently we had here a cold-blooded murderer who would stop at nothing." Holmes nodded and said:

"Poor Simpson. I knew him, Watson. He spent a life successfully avoiding death from the guns and spears of Her Imperial Majesty's enemies, only to meet it in a well-earned retirement while peacefully perusing his copy of *Sporting Life*. Perhaps," he now said to the manager, "you would be good enough to explain why the assassin had only poor Simpson to contend with. In a word, where were the other members of the staff?"

"The whole affair is very curious, Mr. Holmes," said the manager, wiping the back of his neck with a handkerchief. "I received a message just after the start of the recital, indeed shortly after your good self and your friend here had taken your seats. The message informed me that the Prince of Wales and certain friends of his were coming to the concert, though belatedly. It is, of course, well known that His Royal Highness is an admirer of Sarasate. There is a small upper box at the back of the hall normally reserved for distinguished visitors, as I think you know."

"Indeed," said Holmes. "The Maharajah of Johore was once kind enough to honour me as his guest in that exclusive retreat. But do please go on."

"Naturally, myself and my staff," the manager continued, "assembled at the entrance and remained on duty throughout the recital, assuming that the distinguished visitor might arrive only for the final items." He went on to say that, though considerably puzzled, they had remained in the vestibule until the final applause, hazarding the guess that His Royal Highness might, in the imperious but bonhomous manner that was his wont, command the Spanish fiddler to favour him with an encore in a hall filled only with the

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anticipatory majesty of our future King Emperor. Thus all was explained save for the essential problem of the crime itself.

"The message," Holmes demanded of the manager. "I take it that it was a written message. Might I see it?"

The manager drew from an inner pocket a sheet of notepaper headed with the princely insignia and signed with a name known to be that of His Royal Highness's private secretary. The message was clear and courteous. The date was the seventh of July. Holmes nodded indifferently at it and, when the police arrived, tucked the sheet unobtrusively into a side pocket. Inspector Stanley Hopkins had responded promptly to the summons delivered, with admirable efficiency, by one of the manager's underlings in a fast cab.

"A deplorable business, Inspector," Holmes said. "Two murders, the motive for the first explained by the second, but the second as yet disclosing no motive at all. I wish you luck with your investigations."

"You will not be assisting us with the case, Mr. Holmes?" asked the intelligent young Inspector. Holmes shook his head.

"I am," he said to me in the cab that took us back to Baker Street, "exhibiting my usual duplicity, Watson. This case interests me a great deal." Then he said somewhat dreamily: "Stanley Hopkins, Stanley Hopkins. The name recalls that of an old teacher of mine, Watson. It always takes me back to my youthful days at Stoneyhurst College, where I was taught Greek by a young priest of exquisite delicacy of mind. Gerard Manley Hopkins was his name." He chuckled a moment. "I was given taps from a tolly by him when I was a callow atramontarius. He was the best of the younger crows, however, always ready to pin a shouting cake with us in the haggory. Never creeping up on us in the silent oilers worn by the crabbier jebbies."

"Your vocabulary, Holmes," I said. "It is a foreign language to me."

"The happiest days of our lives, Watson," he then said somewhat gloomily.

Over an early dinner of cold lobster and a chicken salad, helped down by an admirable white burgundy well chilled, Holmes disclosed himself as vitally concerned with pursuing this matter of the murder of a foreign national on British soil, or at least in a London concert room. He handed me the presumed royal message and asked what was my opinion of it. I examined the note with some care. "It seems

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perfectly in order to me," I said. "The protocol is regular, the formula, or so I take it, is the usual one. But, since the manager and his staff were duped, some irregularity in obtaining the royal notepaper must be assumed."

"Admirable, Watson. Now kindly examine the date."

"It is today's date."

"True, but the formation of the figure seven is not what one might expect."

"Ah," I said, "I see your meaning. We British do not place a bar across the number. This seven is a continental one."

"Exactly. The message has been written by a Frenchman or an Italian, or, as seems much more probable, a Spaniard with access to the notepaper of His Royal Highness. The English and, as you say, the formula are impeccable. But the signatory is not British. He made a slight slip there. As for the notepaper, it would be available only to a person distinguished enough to possess access to His Royal Highness's premises and to a person unscrupulous enough to rob him of a sheet of notepaper. Something in the configuration of the letter 'e' in this message persuades me that the signatory was Spanish. I may, naturally, be totally mistaken. But I have very little doubt that the assassin was Spanish."

"A Spanish husband, with the impetuousness of his race, exacting a very summary revenge," I said.

"I think the motive of the murder was not at all domestic. You observed my loosening the collar of the dead man and you commented with professional brusqueness on the futility of my act. You were unaware of the reason for it." Holmes, who now had his pipe alight, took a pencil and scrawled a curious symbol on the tablecloth. "Have you ever seen anything like this before, Watson?" he puffed.

I frowned at the scrawl. It seemed to be a crude representation of a bird with spread wings seated on a number of upright strokes which could be taken as a nest. I shook my head. "That, Watson, is a phoenix rising from the ashes of the flames that consumed it. It is the symbol of the Catalonian separatists. They are republicans and anarchists and they detest the centralising control of the Castilian monarchy. This symbol was tattooed on the back of the neck of the murdered man. He must have been an active member of a conspiratorial group."

"What made you think of looking for it?" I asked.

"I met, quite by chance, a Spaniard in Tangiers who inveighed in strong terms against the monarchy which had exiled him and, wip-

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ing the upper part of his body for the heat, disclosed quite frankly that he had an identical tattoo on his chest."

"You mean," I said incredulously, "that he was in undress, or, as the French put it, *en deshabille?*"

"It was an opium den in the Kasbah, Watson," Holmes said calmly. "Little attention is paid in such places to the refinements of dress. He mentioned to me that the nape of the neck was the more usual site of the declaration of faith in the Catalonian republic, but he preferred the chest, where, as he put it, he could keep an eye on the symbol and be reminded of what it signified. I had been wondering ever since the announcement of the visit to London of the young Spanish king whether there might be Catalonian assassins around. It seemed reasonable to me to look on the body of the murdered man for some indication of a political adherence."

"So," said I, "it is conceivable that this young Spaniard, dedicated to art as he seemed to be, proposed killing the harmless and innocent Alfonso the Thirteenth. The intelligence services of the Spanish monarchy have, I take it, acted promptly though illegally. All the forces of European stability should be grateful that the would-be assassin has been himself assassinated."

"And the poor old soldier who guarded the door?" Holmes riposted, his sharp eyes peering at me through the fog of his tobacco smoke. "Come, Watson, murder is always a crime." And then he began to hum, not distractedly, a snatch of tune which seemed vaguely familiar. His endless repetition of it was interrupted by the announcement that Inspector Stanley Hopkins had arrived. "I expected him, Watson," Holmes said, and when the young police officer had entered the room, he bafflingly recited:

"And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea."

Stanley Hopkins gaped in some astonishment, as I might have myself had I not been long inured to Holmes's eccentricities of behaviour. Before Hopkins could stutter a word of bewilderment, Holmes said: "Well, Inspector, I trust you have come in triumph."

But there was no triumph in Hopkins's demeanour. He handed over to Holmes a sheet of paper on which there was handwriting in purple ink.

"This, Mr. Holmes, was found on the dead man's person. It is in Spanish, I think, a language with which neither I nor my colleagues

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are at all acquainted. I gather you know it well. I should be glad if you would assist our investigation by translating it."

Holmes read both sides of the paper keenly. "Ah, Watson," he said at length, "this either complicates or simplifies the issue, I am not as yet sure which. This seems to be a letter from the young man's father, in which he implores the son to cease meddling with republican and anarchistic affairs and concentrate on the practice of his art. He also, in the well-worn phrase, wags a will at him. No son of his disloyal to the concept of a unified Spain with a secure monarchy need expect to inherit a *patrimonio*. The father appears to be mortally sick and threatens to deliver a dying curse on his intransigent offspring. Very Spanish, I suppose. Highly dramatic. Some passages have the lilt of operatic arias. We need the Frenchman Bizet to set them to music."

"So," I said, "it is possible that the young man had announced his defection from the cause, possessed information which he proposed to make public or at least refer to a quarter which had a special interest in it, and then was brutally murdered before he could make the divulgation."

"Quite brilliant, Watson," said Holmes, and I flushed discreetly with pleasure. It was rarely that he gave voice to praise untempered by sarcasm. "And a man who has killed so remorselessly twice is all too likely to do so again. What arrangements, Inspector," he asked young Hopkins, "have the authorities made for the security of our royal Spanish visitors?"

"They arrive this evening, as you doubtless know, on the last of the packets from Boulogne. At Folkestone they will be transferred immediately to a special train. They will be accommodated at the Spanish embassy. Tomorrow they travel to Windsor. The following day there will be luncheon with the Prime Minister. There will be a special performance of Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan's *Gondoliers—*"

"In which the Spanish nobility is mocked," said Holmes, "but no matter. You have given me the itinerary and the programme. You have not yet told me of the security arrangements."

"I was coming to that. The entire Metropolitan force will be in evidence on all occasions, and armed men out of uniform will be distributed at all points of vantage. I do not think there is anything to fear."

"I hope you are right, Inspector."

"The royal party will leave the country on the fourth day by the

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Dover-Calais packet at one twenty-five. Again, there will be ample forces of security both on the dockside and on the boat itself. The home secretary realises the extreme importance of the protection of a visiting monarch—especially since that regrettable incident when the Czar was viciously tripped over in the Crystal Palace."

"My own belief," Holmes said, relighting the pipe, "is that the Czar of all the Russias was intoxicated. But again, no matter."

A policeman in uniform was admitted. He saluted Holmes first and then his superior. "This is open house for the Metropolitan force," Holmes remarked with good-humoured sarcasm. "Come one, come all. You are heartily welcome, sergeant. I take it you have news."

"Beg pardon, sir," the sergeant said, and to Hopkins, "We got the blighter, sir, in a manner of speaking."

"Explain yourself, sergeant. Come on, man," snapped Hopkins.

"Well, sir, there's this kind of Spanish hotel, meaning a hotel where Spaniards go when they want to be with their own sort, in the Elephant and Castle it is."

"Appropriate," Holmes interjected rapidly. "It used to be the Infanta of Castile. Goat and Compasses. God encompasses us. I apologise. Pray continue, sergeant."

"We got there and he must have known what was coming, for he got on the roof by way of the skylight, three storeys up it is, and whether he slipped or hurled himself off, his ——— neck was broke, sir." The printing conventions of our realm impose the employment of a dash to indicate the demotic epithet the sergeant employed. "Begging your pardon, sir."

"You're sure it's the assassin, sergeant?" asked Holmes.

"Well, sir, there was Spanish money on him and there was a knife, what they call a stiletto, and there was a revolver with two chambers let off, sir."

"A matter, Inspector, of checking the bullets extracted from the two bodies with those still in the gun. I think that was your man, sergeant. My congratulations. It seems that the state visit of his infant majesty can proceed without too much foreboding on the part of the Metropolitan force. And now, Inspector, I expect you have some writing to do." This was a courteous way of dismissing his two visitors. "You must be tired, Watson," he then said. "Perhaps the sergeant would be good enough to whistle a cab for you. In the street, that is. We shall meet, I trust, at the Savoy Theatre on the tenth. Immediately before curtain time. Mr. D'Oyly Carte always has two

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complimentary tickets waiting for me in the box office. It will be interesting to see how our Iberian visitors react to a British musical farce." He said this without levity, with a certain gloom rather. So I, too, was dismissed.

Holmes and I, in our evening clothes with medals on display, assisted as planned at the performance of *The Gondoliers*. My medals were orthodox enough, those of an old campaigner, but Holmes had some very strange decorations, among the least recondite of which I recognised the triple star of Siam and the crooked cross of Bolivia.

We had been given excellent seats in the orchestral stalls. Sir Arthur Sullivan conducted his own work. The infant king appeared to be more interested in the electric-light installations than in the action or song proceeding on stage, but his mother responded with suitable appreciation to the jokes when they had been explained to her by the Spanish ambassador. This was a musical experience more after my heart than a recital by Sarasate. I laughed heartily, nudged Holmes in the ribs at the saltier sallies, and hummed the airs and choruses perhaps too boisterously, since Lady Esther Roscommon, one of my patients, as it happened, poked me from the row behind and courteously complained that I was not only loud but also out of tune. But, as I told her in the intermission, I had never laid claim to any particular musical skill. As for Holmes, his eyes were on the audience—and with opera glasses, too—more than on the stage proceedings.

During the intermission, the royal party very democratically showed itself in the general bar, the young king graciously accepting a glass of British lemonade, over which, in the manner of a child unblessed by the blood, he smacked his lips. I was surprised to see that the great Sarasate, in immaculate evening garb with the orders of various foreign states, was taking a glass of champagne with none other than Sir Arthur Sullivan. I commented on the fact to Holmes, who bowed rather distantly to both, and expressed wonder that a man so eminent in the sphere of the more rarefied music should be hobnobbing with a mere entertainer, albeit one honoured by the Queen.

"Music is music," Holmes explained, lighting what I took to be a Tangerine panatella. "It has many mansions. Sir Arthur has sunk, Watson, to the level he finds most profitable, and not only in terms of monetary reward, but he is known also for works of dreary piety. They are speaking Italian together." Holmes's ears were sharper

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than mine. "How much more impressive their reminiscences of aristocratic favour sound than in our own blunt tongue. But the second bell has sounded. What a waste of an exceptionally fine leaf." He referred to his panatella, which he doused with regret in one of the brass receptacles in the lobby.

In the second half of the entertainment, Holmes slept soundly. I felt I needed no more to experience the shame of an uncultivated boor when I succumbed to slumber at a more elevated musical event. As Holmes had said, somewhat blasphemously, music has many mansions.

The following morning, a hasty message from Sir Edwin Etheridge, delivered while I was at breakfast, summoned me to another consultation in the bedroom of his patient on St. John's Wood Road. The young man was no longer exhibiting the symptoms of *latah;* he seemed now to be suffering from the rare Chinese disease, which I had encountered in Singapore and Hong Kong, known as *shook jong*. This is a distressing ailment, and embarrassing to describe outside of a medical journal, since its cardinal feature is the patient's fear that the capacity of generation is being removed from him by malevolent forces conjured by an overheated imagination. To combat these forces, which he believes responsible for a progressive diminution of his tangible generative asset, he attempts to obviate its shrinkage by transfixation, usually with the sharpest knife he can find. The only possible treatment was profound sedation and, in the intervals of consciousness, a light diet.

I very naturally turned onto Baker Street after the consultation, the fine weather continuing with a positively Hispanic effulgence. The great world of London seemed wholly at peace. Holmes, in dressing gown and Moorish turban, was rubbing resin onto his bow as I entered his sitting room. He was cheerful while I was not. I had been somewhat unnerved by the sight of an ailment I had thought to be confined to the Chinese, as I had been disconcerted earlier in the week by the less harmful *latah,* a property of hysterical Malays, both diseases now manifesting themselves in a young person of undoubtedly Anglo-Saxon blood. Having unburdened myself of my disquiet to Holmes, I said, perhaps wisely, "These are probably the sins visited by subject races on our imperialistic ambitions."

"They are the occluded side of progress," Holmes said, somewhat vaguely, and then, less so, "Well, Watson, the royal visit seems to have passed without mishap. The forces of Iberian dissidence have

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not further raised their bloody hands on our soil. And yet I am not altogether easy in my mind. Perhaps I must attribute the condition to the irrational power of music. I cannot get out of my head the spectacle of that unfortunate young man struck lifeless at the instrument he had played with so fine a touch, and then, in his death agony, striking a brief rhapsody of farewell which had little melodic sense in it."

He moved his bow across the strings of his violin. "Those were the notes, Watson. I wrote them down. To write a thing down is to control it and sometimes to exorcise it." He had been playing from a scrap of paper which rested on his right knee. A sudden summer gust, a brief hot breath of July, entered by the open window and blew the scrap to the carpet. I picked it up and examined it. Holmes's bold hand was discernible in the five lines and the notes, which meant nothing to me. I was thinking more of the *shook jong*. I saw again the desperate pain of an old Chinese who had been struck down with it in Hong Kong. I had cured him by countersuggestion and he had given me in gratitude all he had to give—a bamboo flute and a little sheaf of Chinese songs.

"A little sheaf of Chinese songs I once had," I said musingly to Holmes. "They were simple but charming. I found their notation endearingly simple. Instead of the clusters of black blobs which, I confess, make less sense to me than the shop signs in Kowloon, they use merely a system of numbers. The first note of a scale is one, the second two, and so on, up to, I think, eight."

What had been intended as an inconsequent observation had an astonishing effect on Holmes. "We must hurry," he cried, rising and throwing off turban and dressing gown. "We may already be too late." And he fumbled among the reference books which stood on a shelf behind his armchair. He leafed through a Bradshaw and said: "As I remembered, at eleven fifteen. A royal coach is being added to the regular boat train to Dover. Quick, Watson—into the street while I dress. Signal a cab as if your life depended on it. The lives of others may well do so."

The great clock of the railway terminus already showed ten minutes after eleven as our cab clattered to a stop. The driver was clumsy in telling out change for my sovereign. "Keep it, keep it!" I cried, following Holmes, who had not yet explained his purpose. The concourse was thronged. We were lucky enough to meet Inspector Stanley Hopkins, on duty and happy to be near the end of

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it, standing alertly at the barrier of Platform 12, whence the boat train was due to depart on time. The engine had already got up its head of steam. The royal party had boarded. Holmes cried with the maximum of urgency:

"They must be made to leave their carriage at once! I will explain later!"

"Impossible," Hopkins said in some confusion. "I cannot give such an order."

"Then I will give it myself. Watson, wait here with the Inspector. Allow no one to gét through." And he hurled himself onto the platform, crying in fluent and urgent Spanish to the embassy officials and the ambassador himself the desperate necessity of the young king's leaving his compartment with all speed, along with his mother and all their entourage.

It was the young Alfonso XIII, with a child's impetuousness, who responded most eagerly to the only exciting thing that had happened on his visit, jumping from the carriage gleefully, anticipating adventure but no great danger. It was only when the entire royal party had distanced itself, on Holmes's peremptory orders, sufficiently from the royal carriage that the nature of the danger in which they had stood or sat was made manifest. There was a considerable explosion, a shower of splintered wood and shattered glass, then only smoke and the echo of the noise in the confines of the great terminus. Holmes rushed to me, who stood obediently with Hopkins at the barrier.

"You let no one through, Watson? Inspector?"

"None came through, Mr. Holmes," Hopkins replied, "except—"

"Except"—and I completed the phrase for him—"your revered maestro. I mean the great Sarasate."

"Sarasate?" Holmes gaped in astonishment and then direly nodded. "Sarasate. I see."

"He was with the Spanish ambassador's party," Hopkins explained. "He went in with them but left rather quickly because, as he explained to me, he had a rehearsal."

"You fool, Watson! You should have apprehended him." This was properly meant for Hopkins, to whom he now said: "He came out carrying a violin case?"

"No."

I said with heat: "Holmes, I will not be called a fool. Not, at any rate, in the presence of others."

"You fool, Watson, I say again and again, you fool! But, Inspector,

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I take it he was carrying his violin case when he entered here with the leave-taking party?"

"Yes, now you come to mention it, he was."

"He came with it and left without it?"

"Exactly."

"You fool, Watson! In that violin case was a bomb fitted with a timing device which he placed in the royal compartment, probably under the seat. And you let him get away!"

"Your idol, Holmes, your fiddling god. Now transformed suddenly into an assassin. And I will not be called a fool."

"Where did he go?" Holmes asked Hopkins, ignoring my expostulation.

"Indeed, sir," the Inspector said, "where *did* he go? I do not think it much matters. Sarasate should not be difficult to find."

"For you, he will be," Holmes said. "He had no rehearsal. He has no further recitals in this country. For my money he has taken a train for Harwich or Liverpool or some other port of egress to a land where your writ does not run. You can of course telegraph all the local police forces in the port areas, but from your expression I see that you have little intention of doing that."

"Exactly, Mr. Holmes. It will prove difficult to attach a charge of attempted massacre to him. A matter of supposition only."

"I suppose you are right, Inspector," said Holmes after a long pause in which he looked balefully at a poster advertising Pear's Soap. "Come, Watson. I am sorry I called you a fool."

Back in Baker Street, Holmes attempted to mollify me further by opening a bottle of very old brandy, a farewell gift from another royal figure, though, as he was a Mohammedan, it may be conjectured that it was strictly against the tenets of his faith to have such a treasure in his possession, and it may be wondered why he was able to gain for his cellar a part of the Napoleonic trove claimed, on their prisoner's death, by the British authorities on St. Helena. For this remarkable cognac was certainly, as the ciphers on the label made clear, out of a bin that must have given some comfort to the imperial captive.

"I must confess, Watson," said Holmes, an appreciative eye on the golden fluid in his balloon glass, one of a set presented to him by a grateful khedive, "that I was making too many assumptions, assuming, for instance, that you shared my suspicions. You knew nothing of them and yet it was yourself, all unaware, who granted

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me the key to the solution of the mystery. I refer to the mystery of the fingered swan song of the poor murdered man. It was a message from a man who was choking in his own blood, Watson, and hence could not speak as others do. He spoke as a musician and as a musician, moreover, who had some knowledge of an exotic system of notation. The father who wagged his will—alas, as it proved, fruitlessly—had been in diplomatic service in Hong Kong. In the letter, as I recall, something was said about an education that had given the boy some knowledge of the sempiternality of monarchical systems, from China, Russia, and their own beloved Spain."

"And what did the poor boy say?" After three glasses of the superb ichor, I was already sufficiently mollified.

"First, Watson, he hammered out the note D. I have not the gift of absolute pitch, and so was able to know it for what it was only because the piece with which Sarasate concluded his recital was in the key of D major. The final chord was in my ears when the young man made his dying attack on the keyboard. Now, Watson, what we call D, and also incidentally the Germans, is called by the French, Italians, and Spaniards *re*. In Italian this is the word for 'king,' close enough to the Castilian *rey,* which has the same meaning. Fool as I was, I should have seen that we were being warned about some eventuality concerning the visiting monarch. The notes that followed contained a succinct message. I puzzled about their possible meaning, but your remark this morning about the Chinese system of note-naming, note-numbering rather, gave me the answer—only just in time, I may add. In whatever key they were played, the notes would yield the numerical figuration one-one-one-five—C-C-C-G, or D-D-D-A: the pitch is of no importance. The total message was one-one-one-five-one-one-seven. It forms a melody of no great intrinsic interest—a kind of deformed bugle call—but the meaning is clear now that we know the code: the king is in danger at eleven-fifteen on the morning of the eleventh day of July. It was I who was the fool, Watson, for not perceiving the import of what could have been dying delirium but in truth was a vital communication to whoever had the wit to decipher it."

"What made you suspect Sarasate?" I asked, pouring another fingerful of the delicious liquor into my glass.

"Well, Watson, consider Sarasate's origins. His full name is Pablo Martin Meliton Sarasate y Navascuez and he is a son of Barcelona. A Catalonian, then, and a member of a proud family with an anti-monarchist record. I ascertained so much from judicious enquiries

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at the Spanish embassy. At the same time, I discovered the Chinese background of the youthful Gonzales, which, at the time, meant nothing.

"The republicanism of the Sarasate family should have been sufficient to cast a shadow of suspicion over him, but one always considers a great artist as somehow above the sordid intrigues of the political. There was, as I see now, something atrociously cold-blooded in the arrangement whereby the murder of his accompanist was effected only at the conclusion of his recital. Kill the man when he has fulfilled his artistic purpose—this must have been the frigid order delivered by Sarasate to the assassin. I do not doubt that the young Gonzales had confided in Sarasate, whom, as a fellow musician and a great master, he had every apparent reason to trust. He informed him of his intention to betray the plans of the organisation. We cannot be sure of the nature of his motivation—a sudden humane qualm, a shaken state of mind consequent on the receipt of his father's letter. The assassin obeyed Sarasate's order with beat-counting exactitude. My head spins to think of the master's approbation of such a murderous afterpiece to what was, you must admit, a recital of exceptional brilliance."

"The brilliance was, for me, confirmed more by the applause of others than by any judgment of my own. I take it that Sarasate was responsible for another performance less brilliant—the note from His Royal Highness's secretary and the exotic number seven."

"Evidently, Watson. At the Savoy Theatre you saw him chatting amiably with Sir Arthur Sullivan, a crony of the Prince. *Grazie a Dio,* he said among other things, that his long cycle of recitals had finished with his London performance and he could now take a well-earned rest. Any man unscrupulous enough to collaborate with that noted sneerer at the conventions, Mr. William Schwenck Gilbert, would be quite ready to pick up a sheet or so of the prince's private notepaper and pass it on without enquiring into the purpose for which it was required."

"Well, Holmes," I now said, "you do not, I take it, propose to pursue Sarasate to condign punishment, to cut off his fiddle-playing career, and have him apprehended as the criminal he undoubtedly is?"

"Where is my proof, Watson? As that intelligent young Inspector trenchantly remarked, it is all supposition."

"And if it were not?"

Holmes sighed and picked up his violin and bow. "He is a supreme artist whom the world could ill afford to lose. Do not quote my words,

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Watson, to any of your church-going friends, but I am forced to the belief that art is above morality. If Sarasate, before my eyes and in this very room, strangled you to death, Watson, for your musical insensitivity, while an accomplice of his obstructed my interference with a loaded pistol, and then wrote a detailed statement of the crime, signed with the name of Pablo Martin Meliton Sarasate y Navascuez, I should be constrained to close my eyes to the act, destroy the statement, deposit your body in the gutter of Baker Street, and remain silent while the police pursued their investigations. So much is the great artist above the moral principles that oppress lesser men.

"And now, Watson, pour yourself more of that noble brandy and listen to my own rendering of that piece by Sarasate. I warrant you will find it less than masterly but surely the excellence of the intention will gleam through." And so he stood, arranged his music stand, tucked his fiddle beneath his chin, and began reverently to saw.

DETECTIVERSE

WHAT IF, GOD FORBID, SHERLOCK HOLMES HAD NEVER LIVED?

by GARY ALAN RUSE

What's that you say, sir? Had Holmes never lived?
That sad speculation I'll not soon forgive!
How boring would be the library's tomes,
If not for the adventures of old Sherlock Holmes.
Moriarty's schemes would have succeeded unmet
Had Holmes not stopped him, don't forget!
The good Dr. Watson, whose roommate was he,
Would have quietly faded into obscurity.
And sadly also, I'll solemnly intone,
Would have followed unemployment for Basil Rathbone!
So go away, sir, with your awful rhetorica.
Sherlock Holmes lives! Thank God (and Victoria)!

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THE JURY BOX
by JON L. BREEN

Some columns back I remarked on the number of outstanding short-story specialists in the mystery and detective field who remained uncollected. Of that group, none is more deserving of permanence between covers than the Canadian comic genius James Powell, a mainstay of these pages since the April 1966 appearance of "The Friends of Hector Jouvet." That remarkable debut and 13 other tales are included in a trade paperback from a new Canadian publisher. Edited and introduced by Peter Sellers, the volume should rank as a classic, a natural inclusion in *Queen's Quorum* if that list of the most important volumes of detective short stories were continued to the present.

***** James Powell: *A Murder Coming,* Yonge & Bloor, 696 Yonge Street, Suite 606, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2A7; $14.95. The stories, all but two from *EQMM* or *EQ's Prime Crimes,* were written between 1966 and 1975. They present a wide range of the author's themes, with only one entry each from his various series: Maynard Bullock ("The Beddoes Scheme"), nursery rhymes ("Three Men in a Tub"), and Ganelon family ("The Oubliette Cypher"). In a collection with one gem after another, it's tough to pick a favorite, but I found "The Altdorf Syndrome" and "The Gobineau Necklace" especially notable combinations of hilarity and virtuoso plotting. A six-page checklist of Powell's stories gives promise of more collections to come.

**** Anne Perry: *Bethlehem Road,* St. Martin's, $17.95. The tenth Victorian mystery about Charlotte and Thomas Pitt involves a serial killer of Members of Parliament known as the Westminister Cutthroat. (Could there be a connection with the growing movement for women's suffrage?) Some of the claustrophobic quality of earlier novels in the series has dissipated, but it is just as notable for its genteel feminist anger. Style, background, and characterization are splendid, and there is a fine climax, though some traditionalist readers may balk at the choice of murderer. The conclusion embodies a fascinating irony that, alas, can't even be hinted at in a review.

*** Diane K. Shah: *As Crime Goes By,* Bantam, $3.95. The former Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner* sports columnist introduces a new Hollywood journalist-sleuth on the staff of the *Examiner* of forty years ago: Paris Chandler, widow of a member of the L.A. *Times* family, who now works as a legman for movie-world columnist Etta Rice, a Louella Parsons stand-in who remains offstage throughout. Paris tries to find the murderer of a starlet, whose death comes around the time of the real-life Black Dahlia murder. The characters, the first-person narration, and the details of

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time and place are expertly done.

*** C. J. Henderson: *What You Pay For: The Jack Hagee Collection,* Gryphon, P.O. Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228-0209; $10.95. New York private eye Hagee is not a household name: the eleven cases collected here appeared mostly in low-circulation semipro periodicals, and even this 500-copy limited edition (collectors, please note) won't reach as large an audience as it deserves. Henderson is a solid and original writer who brings a great deal of variety (urban hardboiled and outdoor adventure, clued detection and philosophical vignettes, serial killers and espionage) as well as a twist-in-the-tail irony to his stories. In the glutted private-eye field, some follow the conventions slavishly (see Birkett below) while others like Henderson bring a fresh slant. The collection is especially recommended to devotees of physical action and especially *not* recommended to those depressed by a downbeat worldview or grossed out by explicit violence. (Wayne Dundee, in whose magazine *Hardboiled* Hagee debuted, contributes an Introduction, and Michael Cantalupo is credited as editor.)

** Thomas Chastain: *The Case of the Burning Bequest,* Morrow, $16.95. In the author's second Erle Stanley Gardner pastiche, Perry Mason faces evidence against his client cased on DNA typing, a situation not envisioned by his creator. This is entertaining and fast reading, with a nicely complicated puzzle, albeit leading to a predictable killer and including some farfetched elements.

** John Birkett: *The Queen's Mare,* Avon, $3.50. When a valuable mare and foal belonging to Queen Elizabeth are horsenapped from a Kentucky breeding farm, Louisville sleuth Michael Rhineheart is called in. Best way to enjoy this by-the-numbers mystery is to count the private-eye clichés. I don't think Rhineheart ever describes his dreams, but he does get hit over the head and at various times recalls *The Big Sleep, Chinatown,* and any number of lesser tales. Birkett writes capably but needs to establish some semblance of originality.

In the days of Anthony Boucher and John Dickson Carr, true crime was occasionally covered in this space. Though it's uncertain how much crossover readership there is between fictional and factual crime, certain cases (primarily unsolved ones) have a special attraction for fiction readers, among them Jack the Ripper, Lizzie Borden, and the 1922 murder of film director William Desmond Taylor. Not counting Samuel A. Peeples' 1976 time-travel fictionalization, *The Man Who Died Twice* (Academy Chicago, $4.95), Robert A. Giroux's *A Deed of Death* (Knopf, $19.95) is only the second book-length account of the Taylor case. It is even better than its highly entertaining predecessor, Sidney Kirkpatrick's *A Cast of Killers* (1986), offering a more likely if less glitzy solution as well as a vivid picture of Taylor and the Hollywood of his times. It also establishes the victim as an admirable, even heroic figure.

The 1935 death of actress Thelma Todd (accident, suicide, or mur-

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der?) is another fascinating Hollywood mystery. Andy Edmonds' 1989 account of the case, *Hot Toddy* (Avon, $4.95), is a less distinguished piece of writing than any of the Taylor books—documentation is lacking and the author insists on following characters' thoughts, an unacceptable practice in non-fiction—but the mystery and the cast of Hollywood and gangland personalities make it compelling reading.

The Taylor and Todd cases, plus about any other notable historical crime you can think of, are covered in detail in Jay Robert Nash's remarkable *Encyclopedia of World Crime* (Crime Books, Inc., 1213 Wilmette Avenue, Suite 203, Wilmette, IL 60091-2557), a heavy six-volume set comprising some 10,000,000 words on 50,000 topics with 3,500 illustrations. The price ($600.00) is also statistically significant and will rule out most private collectors. But prod your local public, college, or university library to acquire it.

Foul Play Press, Countryman's mystery imprint, continues its reprinting of Joyce Porter's books with *Dover Goes to Pott* ($4.95), a strong 1968 entry in the series about fiction's most (intentionally) obnoxious sleuth. The climax features an unusual variation on one of suspense fiction's most parodiable standard situations. From the same publisher come two good volumes from Phoebe Atwood Taylor's Asey Mayo series at $5.95 each: *Going, Going, Gone* (1943) and *The Asey Mayo Trio* (1946), the latter comprised of three *American Magazine* novelets about the Cape Cod detective.

Some of the best reviewers of mystery fiction appear not in large-circulation magazines and newspapers but in fanzines directed toward a relatively small readership. Steve Lewis's *Mystery File* includes the editor's pithy six-line reviews of mysteries old and new (sometimes supplemented by lengthy footnotes), plus reviews by Dorothy Nathan and Sue Feder. It is available for $1.50 per issue, five for $7.00, from Lewis at 62 Chestnut Road, Newington, CT 06111.

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The annual story contests sponsored by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine *began in 1945 and continued without a break for twelve years, through 1956—then, after a hiatus of five years, the thirteenth and last worldwide contest was held in 1961. An average of 1,000 manuscripts were submitted to each contest, from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas.*

"As is our inviolable rule," wrote Ellery Queen of the first contest, "every submission was read to the last word, and by dint of burning electricity in the blind alleys of the night, until the judges—at that time, Christopher Morley, Howard Haycraft, and your Editors—had a simple chore: all we had to do was pick the best story out of twenty-five—and a pretty kettle of fish this turned out to be. It was not too difficult to eliminate nine of the twenty-five, and these nine were promptly designated Honorable Mentions. That left sixteen. Of these we selected another nine for Special Prizes, reducing to seven our possibilities for First Prize.

"Well, we winnowed those seven down to three—and there we stuck. If we told you how many times the judges met to reanalyze, reappraise, and reconsider those three stories, you simply wouldn't believe it: truth is often stranger than fiction but this time it was fantastic. And we could not, for the lives of us, agree unanimously on which of the stories was better, all around, than the other two. Each story had virtues to recommend it; on the other hand, each story had shortcomings which prevented it from being spontaneously voted the First Prize winner.

"We continued to weigh and balance; we continued to dissect and compare; and we did what judges are supposed to do—we judged. But in all honesty we could not arrive at a decision satisfying to us all. So, in desperation, we asked the writers of the three stories to see if they could do some polishing and sharpening, to see if they could raise their stories another notch in quality, and then, in final desperation, we took the three rewritten versions and subjected them to an arbitrary point system. The story with the highest number of net points would be declared winner of the First Prize."

First Prize Winner Number 1? Manly Wade Wellman's "A Star for a Warrior."

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Manly Wade Wellman was born in 1903, the son of a medical missionary, in Portuguese Angola. He graduated from the University of Wichita. Part American Indian himself, he created David Return, a policeman on the reservation of the fictional Tsichah tribe, called by Ellery Queen "the first truly American detective." Not only did this story about David Return win the first EQ story contest but in 1955 his Dead and Gone *was awarded an Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America as best fact-crime book of the year . . .*

A STAR FOR A WARRIOR

by MANLY WADE WELLMAN

Young David Return half ran across the sunbright plaza of the Tsichah Agency. He was slim everywhere except across his shoulders, his tawny brow, his jaw. For this occasion he had put on his best blue-flannel shirt, a maroon scarf, cowboy dungarees, and, on his slim toed-in feet, beaded moccasins. Behind his right hip rode a sheath-knife. His left hand carried his sombrero, and his thick black hair reflected momentary blue lights in the hot morning. Once he lifted the hat and slapped his thigh with it, in exultation too great for even an Indian to dissemble. He opened the door of the whitewashed cabin that housed the agency police detail and fairly bounded in.

"*Ahi!*" he spoke a greeting in Tsichah to the man in the cowskin vest who glanced up at him from a paper-littered table. "A writing from the white chiefs, Grandfather. I can now wear the silver star."

The other man lifted a brown face as lean, keen, and grim as the blade of a tomahawk. Tough Feather, senior lieutenant of the agency police, was the sort of old Indian that Frederic Remington loved to paint. He replied in English. "Reports here," he said austerely, "are made in white man's language."

David Return blinked. He was a well bred young Tsichah and did his best not to show embarrassment. "I mean," he began again, also

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in English, "that they've confirmed my appointment to the agency police detail and—"

"Suppose," interrupted Tough Feather, "that you go outside and come in again—properly."

Some of the young man's boisterous happiness drained out of him. Obediently he stepped backward and out, pulling the door shut. He waited soberly for a moment, then reentered and stood at attention.

"Agency Policeman David Return," he announced dutifully, "reporting for assignment as directed."

Tough Feather's thin mouth permitted a smile to soften one of its corners. Tough Feather's deepset black eyes glowed a degree more warmly. "Your report of completed study came in the mail an hour ago," he told David, and picked up a paper. "They marked you 'Excellent' everywhere except in discipline. There you're 'Qualified.' That's good, but no more than good enough."

David shrugged. "The instructors were white men. But you'll not have any trouble with me. You're my grandfather, and a born chief of the Tsichah."

"So are you a born chief," Tough Feather reminded him, "and don't forget it. This police work isn't a white man's plaything. We serve the government, to make things better for all Indians. *Ahi*, son of my son," and forgetting his own admonition Tough Feather himself lapsed into Tsichah, "for this I taught you as a child, and saw that you went to school and to the police college. We work together from this day."

"*Nunway*," intoned David, as at a tribal ceremony. "Amen. That is my prayer."

From a pocket of the cowskin vest Tough Feather drew a black stone pipe, curiously and anciently carved. His brown fingers stuffed in flakes of tobacco. He produced a match and struck a light. Inhaling deeply, he blew a curl of slate-colored smoke, another and another and others, one to each of the six holy directions—north, west, south, east, upward, and downward. Then he offered the pipe to David.

"Smoke," he invited deeply. "You are my brother warrior."

It was David Return's coming of age. He inhaled and puffed in turn, and while the smoke clouds signalized the directions, he prayed silently to the Shining Lodge for strength and wisdom. When he had finished the six ritualistic puffs, he handed the pipe back to Tough Feather, who shook out the ashes and stowed it in his pocket. Then from the upper drawer of the desk Tough Feather produced some-

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thing that shone like all the high hopes of all young warriors. He held it out, the silver-plated star of an agency policeman.

Eagerly David pinned it to his left shirt pocket, then drew himself once more to attention. "I'm ready to start duty, Grandfather," he said.

"Good." Tough Feather was consulting a bit of paper with hastily scribbled notes. "David, do you remember an Indian girl named Rhoda Pleasant, who came to the agent last week with letters of introduction?"

"I remember that one," nodded David. "Not a Tsichah girl. A Piekan, going to some university up north. She's pleasant, all right," and he smiled, for Indians relish puns as much as any race in the world.

"Not pleasant in every way," growled Tough Feather, not amused. "She's been here too long, and talked too much, for a stranger woman. Plenty of young Tsichah men like her even better than you do. They might finish up by not liking each other."

"Then she's still here on the reservation? I met her only the one time, and the next day she was gone."

"But not gone away," Tough Feather told him. "Gone in. She borrowed a horse and some things to camp with. You know why, don't you? She wants to learn our secret Tsichah songs." The hard-cut old profile shook itself in conservative disapproval.

"*Ahi*, yes," said David. "She talked about that. Said she was getting her master's degree in anthropology and she's hoping for a career as a scholar and an Indian folklore expert. She told me she'd picked up songs that Lieurance and Cadman would have given ten years of their life to hear and get down on paper. But I couldn't tell her about our songs if I wanted to. We hear them only two or three times a year, at councils and ceremonies."

"The songs are like the chieftainships, passed from father to son in one or two families," reminded Tough Feather. "Right now only three men really know them—"

"And they're mighty brash about it," broke in David, with less than his usual courtesy. "I know them. Dolf Buckskin, Stacey Weed, and John Horse Child. All of them young, and all of them acting a hundred years old and a thousand years smart, out there in their brush camp with a drum—the kind with a pebble-headed stick—and a flute. They think we others ought to respect and honor them."

"And you should," Tough Feather replied stiffly. "They're young, but their fathers and grandfathers taught them songs and secrets

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that come down from our First People. Those three young men are important to the whole Tsichah nation. Too important to be set against each other by Rhoda Pleasant."

"You mean she's out there seeing them?" David was suddenly grave, too. "I see what you're worried about. They'd not pay any attention to a man who asked rude questions, but a young woman as pretty as that Piekan—*ahi!* She'd give anybody squaw fever."

"Go to their camp," commanded Tough Feather. "It's off all the main trails, so you'll have to ride a pony instead of driving a car. Tell the girl she must report back here and then go somewhere else."

David frowned. This was not his dream of a brilliant first case for his record. Then he smiled, for he reflected that the ride back from the camp of the singers would be interesting, with a companion like Rhoda Pleasant. "Where is that camp, Grandfather?"

Tough Feather pointed with the heel of his hand. "Southwest. Take the Lodge Pole Ridge trail, and turn at the dry stream by the cabins of old Gopher Paw and his son. There's no trail across their land, but you'll pick one up beyond, among the knolls and bluffs. That branches in a few miles, and the right branch leads to where the singers are camped. Take whatever pony you want from the agency stable."

"The paint pony?" asked David eagerly.

"He's not the best one," and Tough Feather eyed his grandson calculatingly. "Not the best traveler, anyway."

"Now about a saddle," went on David. "Will you lend me the silver-mounted one that Major Lillie gave you ten years ago?"

Tough Feather smiled, perhaps his first real smile in twenty or thirty days. "All right, take it and take the prettiest bridle, too. You're probably right, David. You'll have less trouble bringing that girl back if you and your pony are good to look at."

The paint pony was not the best in the agency stables, but he was competent on the narrow rough trail that David had to take. His light-shod feet picked a nimble way through the roughest part of the reservation, over ground even less fit for farming than the poor soil of prairie and creek bottoms. It was rolling and stony, grown up here and there with cottonwood scrub and occasional clumps of willow or Osage orange.

Once or twice rabbits fled from the sound of the hoofs, but not too frantically: animals felt safe in the half-cover of this section; long

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ago they had escaped here from the incessant hunting enthusiasm of Tsichah boys with arrows or cheap old rifles.

David followed the right branch of the trail that his grandfather had described and went down a little slope, across an awkward gully where he had to dismount and lead the pony, and beyond among scattered boulders.

He felt that he was getting near his work, and in his mind he rehearsed the words, half lofty and half bantering, with which he would explain to Rhoda Pleasant that she must cease her troublesome researches and head back with him. She was a ready smiler, he remembered, both bolder and warmer in manner than any Tsichah girl he knew. And she wore her riding things with considerable knowledge and style, like a white society girl.

Suppose she elected to be charmingly stubborn, to question his authority? He decided to stand for no nonsense and to admit no dazzlement from her smile and her bright eyes. He would be like the old warriors who had no sense of female romance or glamor, who took sex, like all important things, in their dignified stride.

Then he rode around a little tuft of thorn bushes, and saw that Rhoda Pleasant was beyond hearing arguments or considering authorities.

Here by the trailside was her little waterproofed tent, with a canvas ground cloth and a mosquito bar. Near it was picketed the bay horse she had borrowed at the agency. A fire had burned to ashes, and a few cooking utensils lay beside it. On the trail itself lay Rhoda Pleasant, grotesquely and limply sprawled with her face upward.

Her riding habit was rumpled, her smooth-combed black hair gleamed in the sunlight like polished black stone. She looked like a rag doll that some giant child had played with and dropped on tiring of it. Thrown away, that was how she looked. David Return knew death when he saw it.

He got off his pony and threw the reins over its head, then squatted on his heels beside the body. Rhoda Pleasant's neck-scarf had been white. Now it was spotted with stale blood, dark and sticky. David prodded her cool cheek with a forefinger. Her head did not stir on her neck. That was *rigor mortis*. She had been dead for hours, probably since before dawn. Fully dressed as she was, she might have died before bedtime the night before.

David studied her clay-pale face. The dimmed eyes were open, the lips slack, the expression—she had no expression, only the blank

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look he had been taught to recognize as that of the unexpectedly and instantly stricken.

Gingerly he drew aside the scarf. The throat wound was blackened with powder but looked ragged, as if a bullet and a stab had struck the same mark. Someone had shot Rhoda Pleasant, decided David, then had thrust a narrow, sharp weapon into the bullet hole.

Rising, David turned his attention to the trail. Its earth was hard, but not too hard to show the tracks of moccasins all round the body, moccasins larger than David's. More tracks were plain nearer the tent and the fire, of the large moccasins and of a companion pair, long and lean. Here and there were a third set of moccasin prints, this time of feet almost as small as Rhoda Pleasant's riding boots.

Three men had been there, apparently all together. And there were three tribal singers camped not far away.

David broke bushes across the trail on either side of the body, and from the tent brought a quilt to spread over the blank, dead face. Mounting again, he forced the paint pony off the trail and through thickets where it would disturb no clues. When he came to the trail beyond, he rolled a cigarette and snapped a match alight. Before he had finished smoking, he came to another and larger camp.

In a sizable clearing among the brush clumps, by a little stream undried by the summer heat, stood an ancient Sibley tent like a square-bottomed teepee. Behind it was a smaller shelter, of bent sticks covered thickly with old blankets in the shape of a pioneer-wagon cover. It was big enough for a single occupant's crouching or lying body, and entrances before and behind were tightly lapped over. Near one end burned a small, hot fire, with stones visible among its coals. As David watched, a hand poked out with rough tongs made of green twigs, lifted a stone, and dragged it inside. Strings of steamy vapor crept briefly forth.

"Sweat lodge," said David aloud. The old Tsichah had built and used sweat lodges frequently, but he himself had seen only a few and had been in one just once in his life, as part of the ceremony of joining the Fox Soldier society two years back. He called in Tsichah: "*Ahi*, you singing Indians! Someone has come to see you!"

From the Sibley tent came Stacey Weed. He was taller than David, and leaner, with hair cut long for a young Indian. All that he wore was a breechclout and moccasins. In one hand he carried a canvas bucket, and he turned at first toward where the camp's three horses were tethered on long lariats downstream from the tent. Then he

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pretended to notice David, and lifted a hand in a careless gesture of greeting. "*Ahi*, nephew," he said, also in Tsichah.

To be called nephew by a Tsichah can be pleasant or unpleasant. An older man means it in friendly informality; a contemporary seeks to patronize or to snub or to insult, depending on the tone of his voice. Stacey Weed was perhaps two years older than David, not enough seniority to make for kindliness in the salutation.

"John," called Stacey back into the tent, "we must be important. A boy with a new police star has ridden in."

John Horse Child followed Stacey into the open. He, too, was almost naked, powerfully built, and just under six feet tall. His smile was broad but tight. "I heard that David Return had joined the police," he remarked to Stacey, as though discussing someone a hundred miles away.

David kept his temper. He spoke in English, as he judged his grandfather would do. "I suppose," he ventured, "that Dolf Buckskin's in the sweat lodge."

John and Stacey gazed at each other. Their eyes twinkled with elaborate mockery. "They say that policemen get great wisdom with those stars they wear," said John, carefully choosing the Tsichah words. "They can tell who's in a sweat lodge and who is not. It's a strong medicine. They learn things without being told."

"Then why tell them things?" inquired Stacey brightly.

The two squatted on the earth, knees to chin. John began to light a stone pipe, older and bigger and more ornate than the one Tough Feather had shared with David earlier that morning. It was part of the ceremonial gear these tribal singers used in the rites they knew. John smoked a few puffs, passed it to Stacey, who smoked in turn, then handed the pipe back. Neither glanced at David, who got quickly out of his saddle and tramped toward them. He still spoke in English, which he knew they understood, but he used the deep, cold voice of unfriendly formality.

"I'm as good a Tsichah as either of you ever dared to be," he told them. "I'm a good American citizen, too, and whether you like it or not this ground is part of a government reservation, under police authority. If we're going to have trouble it will be of your starting. I want to ask—"

A wild yell rang from the sweat lodge. Out scuttled Dolf Buckskin, slimmer and shorter and nuder than either of his friends. He shone with the perspiration of the lodge's steamy, hot interior. Even as David turned toward him, Dolf threw himself full length into the

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widest part of the stream and yelled even louder as the cold water shocked his heated skin. He rolled over and over, then sat up and slapped the water out of his shaggy hair.

"Come here, Dolf!" called David, and Dolf pushed his slim feet into moccasins, tied a clout about his hips, and stalked over, with a grin as maddening as Stacey's and John's.

"Rhoda Pleasant," began David, "came and camped nearby, with the idea of tricking you into teaching her our tribal songs."

"We know that," said Dolf.

David decided to go back to the Tsichah tongue, since they refused to drop it. "She made eyes and smiles at the three of you," he went on. "She half promised all sorts of things if you would tell her your secrets."

"We know that," Stacey echoed Dolf, and the three of them looked at each other knowingly, like big boys teasing a little one.

Dolf sat down with his friends, and David stood looking down at them. He pointed trailward with his lifted palm.

"Rhoda Pleasant lies dead back there," he went on, "within a little walk from here."

Then he reflected silently that it is not good to stretch your face with a mocking grin, because when something takes the grin away you look blank, almost as blank as somebody who has been suddenly killed. The three singers betrayed no fear or shock, for they were Indians and steeped from boyhood in the tradition of the stoic; but they succeeded only by turning themselves stupidly expressionless.

John Horse Child broke the silence finally. "We know that, too," he said.

Stacey offered David the ceremonial pipe. It was still alight.

"Smoke," urged Stacey. "We will joke with you no more."

David squatted down with the three, puffing as gravely as when he had smoked with Tough Feather. Then he handed back the pipe and spoke in Tsichah.

"First, let me tell what I know already. You're all tribal singers, medicine men, and when you think your knowledge is big and your position strong, you think the truth. Nobody among the Tsichah can replace any one of you very well. You are keepers of knowledge that should live among the people. You," he tilted his chin at John Horse Child, "play the flute. You," and he indicated Dolf Buckskin, "beat the drum with the pebble-headed drumstick. And Stacey, you are

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the singer and dancer. Without one, the other two are not complete. Besides, you are close friends, like three brothers."

"*Yuh*," assented Stacey. "That is true."

"I know things about the girl, too. A small bullet was fired into her throat, and then a thin knife was stabbed into the same place. She died, I think, not too late last night. And all three of you have been at her camp."

"All three of us have been there several times," said John quietly. "Do you think, David, that all three of us killed her?"

"I think one went alone to her and killed her and made both the wounds," replied David. "I think that one hid his tracks, and that you went together and found her dead this morning. I think the killer has not told his two good friends what he did.

"If these things are true we can believe more things. Of you three, one knows who killed Rhoda Pleasant because he is the killer. Of the other two, each knows that one of his two friends killed her, and he wants to help whichever of the two it may be. I can see that much, because I know who you are and what you do, and what Rhoda Pleasant was trying to do here."

"She came smiling and flattering and asking for our songs," Dolf Buckskin admitted.

"*Ahi*," went on David, "she was a pretty girl, prettier than any on this reservation. Three men, living alone together, find it easy to look at that sort of girl and to like her. Now I come to the place where I am not sure what to think. I cannot say surely which of several reasons the killer had to do that thing."

"Every killer has a reason," said John weightily, handing the pipe along to Stacey.

"It was about the songs, anyway," David ventured.

Stacey smoked the pipe to its last puff, tapped out the ashes, and began to refill it. "Perhaps it was none of us, David. Perhaps some other man, someone who wanted to steal from her."

"No," said David emphatically. "Her face showed no fear or wonder. She had no trouble with the one who came to kill her, and she must have seen him, for the wounds were in front. Nobody else lives near here, anyway. I think the killer is right here."

John's grin of mockery found its way back. "Why don't you arrest the guilty man?" he challenged. "Nobody will stop you."

"But," added Stacey, rekindling the pipe, "you can't take the wrong man. The government courts would set him free, and pay damage

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money for false arrest. Probably the policeman who guessed so foolishly would be discharged."

"I'll get the right one," promised David. "The two innocent men won't be bothered."

"*Ahoh*—thanks," said Stacey deeply, and passed the pipe to Dolf.

"*Ahoh* from me, too," echoed Dolf.

"And from me *ahoh*," chimed in John. The pipe traveled around the circle again, David smoking last. Finally he rose to his feet.

"If you don't hinder me, I want to search the tent," he said.

"What you wish," granted Stacey, receiving the pipe from him.

David went to the tent and inside. Sunlight filtered brownly through the canvas. Three pallets, made up of blankets spread over heaps of springy brush, lay against the walls. David examined with respectful care a stack of ceremonial costumes, bonnets, and parcels in a corner, then turned to the personal property of the three singers.

John's bed could be identified by three flutes in a quiver-like buckskin container, slung to the wall of the tent. David pulled out the flutes one by one. Each was made of two wooden halves, cunningly hollowed out and fitted together in tight bindings of snakeskin. Each had five finger holes and a skillfully shaped mouthpiece. At the head of the pallet lay John's carving tool. David slid it from its scabbard—an old, old knife, its steel worn away by years of sharpening to the delicate slenderness of an edged awl. It showed brightly clean, as from many thrustings into gritty soil. Someone had scoured it clean of Rhoda Pleasant's blood.

On another cot lay Dolf's ceremonial drum, of tight-cured raw buckskin laced over a great wooden hoop and painted with berry juices in the long ago—strange symbols in ocher and vermilion. David looked for the drumstick that he had often seen at public singings, a thing like a little war-club with an egg-sized pebble bound in the split end of the stick. It was not in sight, and he fumbled in the bedclothes.

His fingers touched something hard and he brought it to light—not the drumstick, but an old-fashioned pocket pistol barely longer than his forefinger. David broke it and glanced down the barrel, which was bright and clean and recently oiled.

His exploration of Stacey Weed's sleeping quarters turned up a broad sheath-knife, but no gun. He emerged from the tent with John's slender carving tool and Dolf's pistol.

"You found them," said Stacey, hoisting his rangy body from its squat. "Which killed her?"

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"Both," volunteered John, but David shook his head.

"Either wound would have been fatal," he said, "but the bullet went in first, and the knife followed. That changed the shape of the round bullet hole. As I say, she was struck down from in front, and she knew her killer and had not feared or suspected him."

"That bullet must have struck through her spine at the back of the neck," said Stacey at once, "or she would have looked surprised, at least, before she died."

"*Ahoh*, Stacey," David thanked him. "That is a helpful thought. Now, Rhoda Pleasant smiled on you all, but who did she like best?"

"She wanted only the songs," replied Dolf.

"And did she get any of them?" demanded David quickly.

Stacey shook his head. "I don't think so, David. We sang when she first came, but when we saw her writing on that paper lined out to make music-signs on, Dolf said to stop singing. That was the first day she visited us and cooked our noon dinner."

David tried from those words to picture the visit. Rhoda Pleasant had tried to charm and reassure the three by flattery and food. She had almost succeeded; they had begun to perform. When they grew suspicious and fell silent, had she concealed her disappointment and tried something else? He hazarded a guess, though guessing had been discouraged by his instructors.

"Then she tried paying attention to one of you alone. Which?" He waited for an answer, and none came. "Was it you, John, because you could play the songs on the flute?"

John shook his head, and Stacey spoke for him. "It was I. She wanted both words and music, and I knew them. She whispered for me to visit her camp. That was two days ago.

"I went," Stacey continued, "but she tricked no songs out of me. She tried to get me off guard by singing songs she had heard on other reservations, and the best of them was not as good as our worst. I sang nothing in exchange. Yesterday she came back and tried her tricks on John instead."

"We went riding together," said John. "She talked about songs to me, too, but I only said I had forgotten to bring my flute."

"Then she hunted out Dolf?"

"*Wagh!*" Dolf grunted out the Tsichah negative like an ancient blanket Indian, and scowled more blackly still. "Why should she pay attention to me? I am a drummer, and drum music is easy. The one time she heard us all together was enough to teach her what she wanted to know about my drum."

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More silence, and David examined these new grudging admissions. Rhoda Pleasant had, very practically, concentrated on the two singers whose secrets were hardest to learn. On their own showing, John and Stacey had kept those secrets loyally. "This brings us to last night," said David at last.

"I will say something," John spoke slowly. "You think the pistol killed her, and it's Dolf's pistol. But perhaps he didn't use it. Perhaps Stacey did, or I, to make it look like Dolf."

"Perhaps," granted David. "Perhaps not. I think the stab in the wound was to change the shape of the bullet hole. It covered the killer's trail, as the scratching away of the tracks at her camp did."

"But it hid nothing," reminded John.

"Perhaps it *pretended* to hide something," pursued David. "The killer might have thought that he would give the wound a disguise—but one easy to see through."

"*Ahi*," replied Stacey gravely. "You mean that the bullet hole would mean Dolf's pistol and make him guilty—because the knife is John's and the pistol is Dolf's. Perhaps you want to say that I stole them both and killed Rhoda Pleasant."

"Perhaps he wants to say that I used my own pistol to kill," threw in Dolf, "and did the other things to make the pistol wound look like a fast trail."

"There is a way to show who fired the shots," David informed them. "A white man's laboratory trick, with wax on the gun hand and then acid dripped on to show if there was a fleck of powder left on the hand from the gun going off."

"My hand would show flecks like that," Dolf said readily. "I fired the gun for practice yesterday."

"I saw him," seconded John. "Anyway, David, you promised that you would take only the guilty man. That means you must find him here and now, without going to the agency for wax and acid."

"It was a promise," David agreed, "and the Tsichah do not break their promises to each other." He held out the thin-ground knife. "This was bloody, and now it is clean. Who cleaned it?"

"Whoever used it," said Stacey.

David put the knife on the ground. "You were telling me a story, John. You stopped where you and Rhoda Pleasant went out riding and came back yesterday."

"She left me here at camp and rode on alone," John took up the account. "Dolf and Stacey saw her go away. We three were here together for supper, and together we went to sleep early. Then—"

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"Then, this morning, I went to her camp alone," said Stacey. "Last night, when she came back past here with John, she made me a sign, like this." He demonstrated, a scooping inward to beckon Indian fashion, then a gesture eastward. "Come after sunrise, she told me by that sign. I thought she would beg again for the music. I would let her beg, then laugh at her and say she was wasting her time with us. But I found her lying face up in the trail."

"As I found her," finished David for him. "Well, you probably are telling the truth. If you were questioned long in this way, any lies in your stories would trip each other up. This much is plain as your tracks at her camp: the killer went to her alone, with the knife and the pistol. He did not want his friends to know—"

"His friends do not ask to know," said Dolf, with an air of finality.

"Because," amplified John, hugging his thick knees as he squatted, "his friends know, like him, that Rhoda Pleasant was a thief of secrets. Nobody here is sorry she died, though we would be sorry if one of us suffered for killing her."

"Nobody is sorry she died?" repeated David, and tried to study all three of their faces at once. They stared back calmly.

"But all three went to her camp," said David again. "Not Stacey alone."

"I came and got them to see her," Stacey told him. "We had to decide what to do. We saw everything there you saw. We talked as we waited there. Finally we agreed we must carry the news, after we all took sweat baths."

"Sweat baths?" echoed David. "Why?"

"We are medicine men, and we had all touched a dead body," John answered him coldly. "Sweat baths are purification; or have you forgotten the Tsichah way since you learned the policeman's way?"

"I have forgotten neither way," was David's equally cold response. "Who said to carry the news, and who said to take the sweat bath?"

"I thought of both those things," Dolf volunteered.

"No, I think I did," argued Stacey. "I built the fire, anyway, and gathered the rocks to heat."

"But I took the first bath," insisted John, "for I touched her first when we saw her together. Then Stacey took his, and then Dolf, who had not finished when you first came."

David pointed to the slim knife he had brought from the sleeping tent. "This went to the lodge with you, John?"

"If you expect to find prints of guilty fingers, you will not," said John. "Yes, I took the knife into the sweat lodge—to purify it from

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the touch of that dead Piekan squaw, *ahi*," and he put out his palm and made a horizontal slicing motion. "I finish. That is the end of what I will say."

There was silence all around. David stooped and took the knife, wedging it into the sheath with his own, then put Dolf's pistol into his hip pocket.

"Something here I have not yet found," he announced. "And I have wondered about it all the time we were talking. I think I know where it is now. I, too, am going into your sweat lodge. Can any of you say why I should not?"

They stared, neither granting nor denying permission. David walked past the Sibley tent to the close-blanketed little structure, pulled away the blanket that sealed the door, and peered in through the steam that clung inside. It billowed out, grew somewhat thinner, and he could see dimly. Under his breath he said a respectful prayer to the spirit people, lest he be thought sacrilegious in hunting there for what he hoped to find. Then he dropped to all fours and crawled in.

On the floor stood an old iron pot of water, still warm. In it were a dozen of the stones that had been dropped in at their hottest to create the purifying steam. David twitched up his sleeve and pulled out one stone, then other and another. They were like any stones one might find in that part of the reservation. He studied the ground, which was as bare and hard as baked clay, then rose from all fours and squatted on his heels. His hands patted and probed here and there along the inner surface of blankets, until he found what he was looking for.

He seized its little loop of leather cord and pulled it from where it had been stuck between the blankets and one of the curved poles of the framework. A single touch assured him, and he edged into the open for a clear examination of it.

The thing was like a tiny war-club of ancient fashion. A slender foot-long twig of tough wood had been split at the end, and the two split pieces curved to fit around a smooth pebble the size of an egg. Rawhide lashings held the stone rigidly in place. It was the ceremonial drumstick he had missed when searching Dolf Buckskin's bed in the tent, the absence of which he had been trying to fit into the story of Rhoda Pleasant's death. He balanced it experimentally, swung it against his open hand, carefully bent the springy wooden handle.

Then he thrust it inside his shirt, standing so that the three watch-

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ing singers could be sure of what he handled and what he did with it. He walked over to where his pony cropped at some grass.

"I'm going to look at Rhoda Pleasant once more," he announced. "That look will be all I need to tell me everything."

Mounting, he rode slowly up the trail to the silent camp of the dead girl. He dismounted once again and took the cover from the expressionless face.

Again he put out a finger to touch, this time at the side of the head, where Rhoda Pleasant's hair was combed smoothly over the temple. He felt the other temple, and this time his finger encountered a yielding softness.

"*Ahi*," he grunted, as if to confirm everything. "The thin bone was broken."

He returned to his horse and lounged with his arm across the saddle, quietly waiting.

Hoofbeats sounded among the brush in the direction of the singers' camp. After a moment Dolf Buckskin rode into sight. He had pulled on trousers and a shirt, as though for a trip to the agency.

"I am waiting for you," called David to him.

"I knew you would be," replied Dolf, riding near. "Maybe I should have told you all about it when you brought my drumstick out of the sweat lodge, but it was hard to speak in front of my two friends who were trying to help me."

"You need not tell me much," David assured him, as gently as he could speak. "I knew the answer when John told of purifying his carving knife in the sweat lodge because it had touched the dead body of Rhoda Pleasant. Your drumstick was missing. I reasoned that if the drumstick was also in the sweat lodge, all was clear. And it was. Why should you have taken the drumstick into the lodge? Only to purify it, as you yourself must be purified. Why should it need purifying? Only if the drumstick, too, had touched the dead body. Why should it have touched the dead body? Only if the drumstick were the true weapon."

David paused. "You're a good drummer, Dolf. By long practice you can strike to the smallest mark—even the thin bone of the temple—swiftly and accurately, with exactly the strength you choose. That pebblehead is solid, the handle is springy. It was a good weapon, Dolf, and easier to your hand than any other."

"She did not even hear me as I came up behind her," Dolf said with something like sorrowful pride. "You were wrong about her seeing the killer and not fearing him. She never knew."

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"You used your own gun and John's knife to hide the real way of killing. They were the false trails. But you could not break the old ceremonial rites. The true weapon had to be purified—and so I knew the truth."

Dolf raised his head and looked at the still form. "It's strange to think of what I did. I wanted her so much."

"*Yuh*," and David nodded. "You wanted her. She would not look at you, only at John and Stacey. You were left out, and your heart was bad. Perhaps if you explain to the court that for a time your mind was not right, you will not be killed, only put in jail."

"I don't think I want to live," said Dolf slowly. "Not in jail, anyway. Shall I help you lift her and tie her on her horse's back?"

"*Ahoh*," said David. "Thank you."

When the three horses started on the trail back, David glanced down at his silver-plated star. It was dull and filmy—from the steam of the sweat lodge. An agency policeman's star should not be dull at the end of his first successful case. It should shine like all the high hopes of all young warriors. Proudly David burnished the metal with his sleeve—until it shone with the wisdom of the Shining Lodge and the strength of the white man's star.

"Q"

FIFTY YEARS AGO . . .

January 6: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered his Four Freedoms address (freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear)
January 9: Joan Baez born
Susannah York born
January 13: James Joyce died
January 14: Faye Dunaway born
January 21: Placido Domingo born
January 24: Neil Diamond born

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"Suppose a certain know-it-all spinster teacher were to stick her hand into her drawer to pull out her favorite marking pen and discover someone had placed several poisonous spiders in the drawer," the paper read. "If there were three different species of spiders, and there were three Black Widow spiders and five Brown Recluse spiders, how many tarantulas were there if each spider bit her one time and she had fourteen spider bites in all?"

EQMM first-story author Cheryl Brinkmann Johnson lived in the St. Louis area prior to 1990, which means, she writes, "I am a born and bred Cardinals fan. Attending baseball games has become more difficult but not impossible since my recent move to Kansas. After a decade spent as a systems analyst for the telephone company, I decided to pursue some of my dreams. To that end, I became a mother, worked as an instructor in the mathematics department of a local university, and started writing. I'm married, have one daughter, and am presently working on a mystery novel."

Here's to the pursuit of all our dreams in the new year . . .

SUPPOSE

by CHERYL BRINKMANN JOHNSON

"Class dismissed. Place your papers on my desk as you leave." As the students straggled out the door, Dr. Margaret Pierce turned her back and began erasing the blackboard. She muttered to herself, making energetic swipes at the board to punctuate her thoughts. The *idea* of wasting someone with *her* mathematical talents on a group of *freshmen* who weren't even math majors was *ridiculous*! Why, most of these students couldn't even recognize a quadratic equation, much less *solve* one!

Wiping her hands as she turned from the board, Margaret com-

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pared the clock on the wall to the watch strapped to her wrist; the university clocks were hopelessly inaccurate. She was pleased to see there was enough time before the next class to grade the papers the students had just turned in. Not that she looked forward to it. The homework from this class was deplorable.

With a sigh, she sat down and picked up the first paper. She had asked the students to invent a word problem and then solve it. Frowning over the first seven or eight papers, Margaret thought a third-grade *child* could do better than most of these. She snatched up the red felt-tip pen she used to grade papers. (One of the other instructors had remarked that when Margaret finished grading a paper it looked as if it bled from multiple wounds.)

The red pen slashed its way through the students' papers. Margaret demanded absolute perfection. It was obvious that too many of the other teachers coddled their pupils—otherwise these students could never have survived this long.

Picking up another paper, Margaret noticed the student had neglected to put his name on it—an automatic loss of five points. The red pen danced. When she read a word problem, Margaret barely noticed what the words were saying except to understand how to solve the problem. So she was almost through this one before she comprehended what the words meant. She went back to the beginning and read again:

> "Suppose a certain know-it-all spinster teacher were to stick her hand into her drawer to pull out her favorite marking pen and discover someone had placed several poisonous spiders in the drawer. If there were three different species of spiders, and there were three Black Widow spiders and five Brown Recluse spiders, how many tarantulas were there if each spider bit her one time and she had fourteen spider bites in all?"

Margaret's hands began to itch. She exercised rigid self-control to keep from looking around for spiders. So, she thought, one of my immature students thinks he's funny. We'll see how funny he thinks it is when he flunks this class!

First she needed to identify the author. Margaret got out her grade book and compared the class roster to the papers in front of her. Unbelievably, she had a paper from everyone in the class—with a name on it. Margaret was surprised that anyone in the class had been smart enough to think of turning in two papers. Slowly, she went back through the papers and compared the handwriting. But

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none of the legitimate papers were written in the same handwriting or with the same pen.

She frowned. This seemed like something Dan Murdoch would think was funny. Dan was a mediocre math student. But his girl friend, Kristy Sawyer, was a talented mathematician. In class, Dan enjoyed trying to stump Margaret with questions Kristy had provided him with. He probably thought of it as just having fun, but Margaret despised anything that made her look foolish.

While she was still thinking of ways to avenge herself, she picked up her red pen and began correcting the student's solution.

He hadn't even used an equation. He had drawn fourteen little circles to represent bug bites and had written *black* by three of them and *brown* by five of them. Thus he had arrived at the answer of six for the number of tarantula bites. It didn't matter to Margaret if the answer was correct—this was algebra class and problems were supposed to be solved using algebraic methods. Really, she thought, a kindergartner could have solved the problem by drawing pictures!

Smiling to herself, she made big scarlet figures on the paper as she correctly solved the problem: x = number of tarantula bites, x + 3 + 5 = 14, x = 6. Then, she went out into the hall and tacked the paper prominently on the bulletin board outside the classroom. There, let Dan's friends see how clever he really was.

Late that afternoon, Margaret parked her car in her driveway. She lived on a narrow residential street made even narrower by cars parked along the curb. Her neighbor had an annoying habit of parking in front of Margaret's mailbox, which prevented her from pulling up to it in her car. As she walked back down the driveway to the mailbox, Margaret formulated the lecture she'd deliver to her neighbor.

She was surprised to see a small package sitting on top of the letters in her mailbox. Pulling it out, she noticed it was a plain white cardboard box of the type department stores use as gift boxes for jewelry purchases. But, since there was no address on it, it hadn't been mailed. When she opened the lid, Margaret caught a glimpse of three spiders inside the box before she dropped it and jumped backward into the street.

Standing beside her neighbor's car, Margaret peeked cautiously over the hood at the white box and its spilled contents. She could see two of the spiders beside the box. They didn't appear to be moving. Either they were dead or just stunned from the fall. Margaret

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waited a few seconds more, staring at the spiders. One appeared to be lying on its back—it was probably dead.

Margaret took a few cautious steps forward, watching the spiders closely for any sign of movement. She wished she could see the third spider. It could be concealed among some dead leaves blown up against the curb. Margaret's next step brought her close to the two spiders beside the overturned box. She quickly stamped on them, grinding her sensible black shoe back and forth. They were certainly dead now. With the toe of her shoe, Margaret flipped the box over, revealing the third spider. Without pausing to check on its health, she gave it the same treatment as its companions.

She picked up the white box and its lid, using her fresh linen handkerchief. She had the feeling someone was watching her, but when she looked carefully around at the parked cars, she saw no one.

When she arrived at the college the next day Margaret walked straight to the bulletin board outside her classroom. The paper was gone—only a blank space and a thumbtack stuck in the faded green cork showed where it had been. Margaret's scalp tingled. Don't be silly, she told herself, this is just one of Dan Murdoch's childish stunts.

But what if it was something more? Suppose one of her students was mentally deranged? Margaret hadn't even looked at the spiders closely. Had they been poisonous? And had someone watched her performance with the spiders? If so, he probably found it extremely amusing. He was probably laughing about it right now. Her face flushed at the idea.

She intended to get to her algebra class early so she could watch each student as he or she walked into the classroom. In the past, she had found a withering stare was a good way to unnerve students who might be thinking about cheating on a test or participating in some other forbidden activity. However, just as she reached the doorway the department chairman, Dr. Rothman, stopped her.

"Margaret, I need to talk to you about the grade you gave Kristy Sawyer on her senior-level project."

"What about it?" snapped Margaret.

"Well, Margaret, don't you think failing her is pretty severe treatment? She'll have to rework the whole project in order to graduate. Couldn't you just give her a B or, um, a C? I mean, she only made one small error."

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Under Margaret's determined glare, Dr. Rothman's voice trailed away. Margaret stabbed at the air between them with her index finger. "That kind of remark is typical of your whole attitude toward education, Dr. Rothman. Based on her *one small error*, her conclusion was incorrect."

"Well, now, not substantially incorrect," Dr. Rothman inserted hopefully.

"There is no room in mathematics for partially correct answers. I cannot believe that you would consider asking me to change my grade. When you retire and I replace you as department head, more attention will be paid to educating students instead of passing them." With that, Margaret brushed by Dr. Rothman and stalked into the classroom.

Most of the students were already in their seats. On Margaret's desk, a paper lay face down. Margaret's spine stiffened as she turned it over and read:

> "Suppose a self-righteous, self-important math teacher was walking to her car one evening and was attacked by a band of justifiably incensed students. If there were three times as many right-handed students as left-handed students and each student stabbed her twice and the coroner said there were sixteen stab wounds on the body, how many left-handed students participated in the attack?"

Striving to control herself, Margaret held the paper aloft and asked the students if they knew who had placed it on the desk. For a moment, no one answered, but several of the students looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders. Most just stared fixedly back at Margaret. Finally, one of the boys in the front row said he thought the paper had been there when he came into the room. A few of the other students nodded their heads in agreement.

After class, Margaret read the word problem again. It was in the same handwriting as the previous note about spiders. This time, the author solved the problem with a linear equation. However, as Margaret expected, it was not solved correctly. She pulled out her red felt-tip marker. The author had written: x = number of left-handed students, $3x$ = right-handed students, $x + 3x = 16$, $x = 4$.

With broad red strokes, Margaret underlined the word "twice" in the word problem. She crossed out the student's solution and wrote: $2(x + 3x) = 16$, $x = 2$. She underlined her answer several times. Then, with her back straight and a triumphant smile on her face,

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she marched out into the hall and posted the paper on the bulletin board. That would show Dan Murdoch. Margaret Pierce could not be intimidated.

After her last class, Margaret checked the bulletin board. The absence of the red-splotched paper made her heart jump. What if this *wasn't* one of Dan's silly tricks? One thing was certain, she was not walking to her car by herself tonight.

She dawdled by the math-department secretary's desk while another instructor, Carol Nestermann, talked to a student in her office. Carol's classes were over for the day but she frequently had students in her office asking her for help. Margaret had tried to discourage Carol from spending so much of her free time helping her students, pointing out that anyone could get a college degree if they were spoon-fed information. Carol just stared at Margaret, then, in what Margaret would describe as a sarcastic tone, had said, "Well, we can't have *that*, can we?"

"Okay, Carol, thanks a lot. See you in class." The student slung his heavy backpack onto his shoulder, nodded at Margaret, and hurried out the door. Margaret frowned and shook her head. She'd already spoken to Carol about permitting her students to call her by her first name. Margaret felt it showed a lack of respect. Nevertheless, she stuck to Carol's side as they walked to their cars. All the students loved Carol—hopefully, even the deranged ones.

Margaret's car was parked just two spaces beyond Carol's. As she continued to her car alone, Margaret felt a prickle up and down her spine. She'd had the foresight to park under a light in the parking lot, so she didn't inadvertently scratch the paint with her key as she searched for the lock, but tonight, although the light made her feel a little safer, it also made her feel as though she was on display. If someone was watching, they clearly could see all her movements.

She unlocked the door and pulled it wide, prepared to slide in quickly and lock the door behind her. Until she saw the knife.

It was stabbed into the seat cushion precisely where one of her shoulder blades would be if she were sitting in the driver's seat. Margaret backed away from the car, her hand clasped against her mouth.

"Anything wrong?"

The sudden sound of Carol's voice made Margaret jump. She tried to hide her confusion and think of something reasonable to say. She

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didn't want to tell Carol about the knife. Carol would probably feel that she deserved these aggravations.

"No—oh, no." Margaret forced an uncharacteristic smile. "I, uh, just remembered something." She took a few steps toward Carol's car. "Everything's just fine."

Carol gave Margaret a confused stare, but when Margaret continued to stand there smiling and waving she drove off.

Turning back to her car, Margaret yanked the knife out of the seat cushion and threw it into the front passenger seat as she jumped into the car. Her anxiety was so great she didn't bother to look and see how extensive the damage to the seat cushion was.

Driving home, she thought about calling the police and telling them about the threatening word problems, the spiders, and the knife. But what could the police really do? Possibly there were fingerprints on the knife, but Margaret's heart sank at the idea of the police coming to the college and taking Dan's fingerprints—she couldn't bear the thought of appearing ridiculous.

When she arrived home, Margaret was irritated to see her neighbor had again parked one of his cars so that she couldn't drive up to her mailbox. Forced to park in the driveway and walk back out to the street to get her mail, she felt nervous but she had to stand up to her fears.

As soon as she opened the mailbox, she saw the paper with the familiar handwriting. With shaking hands, she took it out and read:

> "Suppose a certain department chairman was preparing to retire after dedicating thirty years of his life to encouraging and educating students. Suppose the board has picked a fanatical, self-righteous old-maid teacher as his replacement and the man is concerned that her compulsively critical behavior will soon negate all his efforts. Suppose this man already had a smashed front fender on his car with the damage totalling $435.00. After he runs over the teacher, the auto-body shop estimates the total damage to the car is $565.00. In dollars, how much did his revenge upon the teacher cost him?"

Below the word problem, the author had written: x = dollar amount of the extra damage, x + $435 = $565, x = $130.

Automatically, Margaret reached for her red pen. Five hundred feet down the street, a brown Ford Escort with a damaged right front fender pulled out from the curb and began to race toward her.

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She didn't look up from the paper. The red felt-tip marker was dashing across the page.

When the car was almost on top of her, Margaret threw down the red-splotched paper and leapt out of the way as the Escort crashed into her neighbor's car, barely missing her.

The Escort's horn blared as Margaret got up off the ground, brushed the leaves and grass off her skirt, and replaced her wire-framed glasses on her nose. She opened the Escort's passenger door and the driver lifted his head from the steering wheel. The horn's blast ended.

The driver was groaning and rubbing his forehead. He was wearing a blue pin-striped suit, a maroon tie, and a dark-blue ski mask. Apparently his nose had started to bleed because the front of the ski mask looked shiny and his shirtfront had blood stains on it. Margaret contemplated the masked driver for several seconds and then retrieved the word problem from underneath the crumpled car.

Holding the paper up against the side window of the car, she pulled out her felt-tip pen and began writing furiously on the bottom of the paper. As the pen continued to make scarlet paths back and forth across the paper, the injured driver groaned and shook his head.

Finally, Margaret stopped writing, capped the pen with a satisfied flourish, and, being careful not to let his nose drip blood onto the snowy sleeve of her white blouse, she slid the word problem across the front seat. Without a word, she carefully shut the car door and marched into her house, thinking about the words she'd written. "Congratulations! You finally solved one correctly!"

And then, below his word problem:

> "Suppose a mathematically brilliant college professor was burdened with lazy students who have no interest in learning anything but just want to get credit for the course. Suppose her boss thinks it's unkind to expect students to succeed and has made three attempts on her life. If the professor reports these crimes, the resulting scandal would cause at least 125 students to transfer to a different school. Annual tuition at this school is five thousand dollars per student. If the professor agrees not to report the attempts to the police and her boss agrees not to pursue any further attempts, what is the minimum amount of money the boss's beloved school will save over the next three years?"

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The years had taught Thomas Kendall that he didn't really need much, that he wasn't as barren a personality as most human beings clearly were, terrified of solitude and extraordinary circumstances. But it was just possible that he needed this magazine, needed some added stimulation in his life before he drifted numbly through the rest of his years like a man going to sleep in the snow.

The Cain Chronicle—*the first magazine Thomas had subscribed to in his life—was almost a hundred years old. Almost double the age of* Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine—*but attracting a very different kind of reader, we hope . . .*

THE SUBSCRIPTION

by SHARON PISACRETA

It wasn't a typical day for Thomas Kendall. Freezing rain had fallen during the night, forcing him to spend at least ten minutes scraping off his car windows before cautiously backing out of the driveway. Shortly thereafter he was dismayed to find himself in a ditch off Ann Arbor Trail, having swerved to avoid a pastry truck skidding out of control. Then, unbelievably, his windshield-wiper fluid ran out, necessitating a hunt for a service station through perilously grimy windows. Thomas was going to be late to work and he wasn't pleased.

Thomas Kendall had never been late during his six years as customer-service manager at a restaurant-supply company in Dearborn. Never. He wasn't sure he could forgive himself for such uncharacteristic behavior. For not only had he been disgracefully late, but he'd forgotten to bring his yogurt and banana for lunch (something he hadn't done for at least a year), and at 4:00 he was

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mortified to realize that he'd actually misplaced the invoice for an order from Hanson's Catering Service.

The day was now an absolute shambles. Although Thomas rarely failed at anything he turned his hand to (failure was sloppy and stupid and Thomas was neither), today he felt he was making up for a lifetime of conscientious efficiency. It seemed as though 5:30 would never arrive. But even the drive home brought no relief. His throat began to feel scratchy, his brow was hot, and he was convinced he was coming down with a viral infection. He was feeling so tired and spiritless that he nearly didn't check his mailbox before entering the house. Not that it mattered. Aside from bills and advertisements, there was seldom any mail in his mailbox—never a greeting card, letter, book-club package, or parcel from a mail-order catalogue. Thomas was a solitary man, a private man, and mail was an unsolicited intrusion that he tried to keep out of his life as much as possible.

Yet this night Thomas paused before entering his small suburban house. The mailbox door was ajar, suggesting it held something, but his normal calm was shaken by the mishaps of the day. Reluctant to subject himself to any additional outside contact, he hesitated before lifting the lid and removing a Consumers Power bill and a flier from a new pizzeria on Plymouth Road. Nothing too bothersome, he thought with relief—before catching sight of the large, thick manila envelope curled at the side of the mailbox.

He removed it as cautiously as if it were a hibernating snake about to coil and strike if handled too roughly. Feeling the flat weight beneath his gloved fingers, Thomas decided it was a large stack of papers, perhaps something to do with income-tax returns. But there was only a post-office box number as the return address—not the Internal Revenue Service's usual style.

It wasn't until after he had cooked and eaten his usual Tuesday dinner of pork chops, boiled potatoes, and canned peas that Thomas would allow himself to sit at the cleared-away kitchen table and scrutinize the envelope again. He estimated its weight to be at least a couple of pounds. Gazing at it a few minutes more, a wary but puzzled Thomas at last began to slit open the envelope with a butter knife, the sound of ripping paper filling the otherwise silent house.

He pulled out a very thick and glossy magazine. In fact, it felt so solid and heavy in his hands that he had to look twice to make certain it wasn't actually a book. The magazine displayed the words *The Cain Chronicle* above a photograph of a silver dagger set on a

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mound of black velvet, its engraved pommel glittering with sapphires. Even before he turned to the first page, Thomas felt something stir inside him. Somehow it seemed inevitable, as though the disruptions and uneasiness of this day had been leading inexorably to such an unexpected moment.

At first, all he took in were the multiple images of blades and metal, but on closer inspection he saw that the magazine was filled with photos and drawings not only of blades, but of hilts, pommels, T-bars, and scabbards. Apparently it was a journal dedicated to the examination of knives. The accompanying articles covered such arcane topics as the evolution of the Scottish dirk and the utility of stilettos. There was even an analysis of how many centimeters wide the most effective stab wound should be, and each weapon's destructive potential was actually rated at the back of the magazine, so many stars being awarded according to the rapidity of death.

My God, Thomas thought. Is this what magazines are like now? It had been so long since he had picked up a magazine or leafed through a journal that it occurred to him that perhaps the world was indeed becoming increasingly degenerate, just as his father had always claimed. Still, this couldn't be a typical example of journalism, at least not for common consumption. How many of the general public needed or wanted to learn about the killing power of Kyber knives or how to attack an opponent with the Indian *khouttar* or why the *main gauche* appeared during the Italian Renaissance? No, he felt that this was something rare, something extraordinary. And it had been sent to him.

Thomas read the entire magazine that night, noting with interest that not a single advertisement graced its nearly 700 pages, nor was there a phone number or any address at all save for that post-office box on the contents page. Granted, there was a short list of contributing editors (without any accompanying biographical information or photos) but Thomas was struck by the remarkably nondescript names: Frank Carter, Jane Smith, Susan Jones, Dan Taylor. He didn't waste time worrying about any of this, however, for the magazine provided him with more pleasure and excitement than anything that had happened in his life for years.

In particular, he found himself returning to a photograph of his favorite specimen, whose tapering double-edged blade tantalized him. He stared at the black-and-white image for so long he thought he would probably dream that night of its turned and checkered brass grip, its cunning crosspiece, and, above all, its fine diamond-

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section blade designed to sink point first into its victim. The accompanying article told him it was an "FS" or Fighting Knife designed for WW II commandos, a knife designed for the sole purpose of killing another human being at close quarters.

If Thomas felt a shred of regret about his profoundly ordered life, it lay in his misfortune at having been born a generation too late. For he had not been alive during the war with Hitler; he hadn't had the opportunity to outwit Rommel in the African desert or the chance to parachute into occupied France, sabotaging Gestapo activities before stealing away into the night. He had never faced such marvelously efficient and organized evil and been able to match his resources against it. Now he knew that his regret would have been even sharper had he known that such a sleek weapon had been available for killing—a weapon made to fit so easily in the hand, poised and balanced, ready for the deadly thrust, the lethal blow. In, out—the deed done. Wipe the blade and march on.

Thomas felt a sharp twinge at the utter banality of his adult existence, yet he didn't wish the magazine hadn't come into his life. Instead he gazed at it long into the night, an inexperienced lover startled by the ferocity of his desire. And, like an unsure suitor fearful yet eager for further contact, he saved until last the sheet of embossed vellum that fell out of the back page.

"Greetings, Mr. Kendall:" the letter began. "We are proud to offer you a complimentary copy of *The Cain Chronicle*, a magazine dedicated to the pursuit of weapons research. As a discerning reader, you will welcome, we are sure, the opportunity to delve deeper into the technological history of violence and the psychology of aggression. This journal has been created for an exclusive audience. It cannot be found on newsstands and is available through personal invitation only. Please take the time to peruse our extraordinary journal, after which we ask that you return the enclosed subscription card, checking off either 'yes' or 'no.' We hope that you will choose to accept our special offer of a six-month trial subscription for only $49.95. After that time, if you decide to remain a *Cain Chronicle* reader, a special annual subscription rate will be offered at only $100.00. Remember, this is a one-time offer which will allow you to become part of a unique intellectual experience. After carefully examining our magazine, we hope you will choose to join the growing but select *Cain Chronicle* readership."

It was signed "Frank Carter, Editor-in-Chief."

Thomas had never joined or subscribed to anything in his entire

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life—not a magazine, book club, charitable organization, or Little League team. Other people and their activities were of profound disinterest to him. All he had ever wanted was to be allowed to work for eight hours a day, come home, perhaps listen to classical-music tapes while reading his worn volume of Schoepenhauer, and then go to bed. Oh, a long time ago, he had wondered if perhaps a girl friend or wife might have added something to his life, but his natural reserve had long overcome that thought. Besides, the years had taught him that he didn't really need much, that he wasn't as barren a personality as most human beings clearly were, terrified of solitude and extraordinary circumstances.

But it was just possible that he needed this magazine, needed some added stimulation in his life before he drifted numbly through the rest of his years like a man going to sleep in the snow. And it was an exceptional offer, after all: a unique, slightly sinister magazine which was unexpectedly offering him a way to gaze upon the visage of violence while safely remaining out of harm's way.

It was after 3:00 A.M. when Thomas finally went to bed. He was exhausted and slightly feverish and his throat felt much worse, but the last thing he did before retiring was to check off YES on *The Cain Chronicle* subscription card. He slept soundly for the rest of the night and dreamed for hours.

Over the next few months Thomas Kendall's co-workers noticed a subtle difference in their taciturn, nearly invisible customer-service manager. Oh, he still refused all invitations to lunch, still showed no interest in any outside activity proposed by a fellow employee, and, most frustratingly, still maintained a discreet silence regarding his personal life (about which any number of scenarios had been put forth during the past six years). If anything he now seemed more aloof and inaccessible, but his demeanor had clearly changed. It was a touch more decisive. His "yes" and "no" now held weight behind them, and one couldn't assume as before that Thomas would easily accede to a company demand or a proposed compromise.

At first this left his fellow workers mystified, but it was finally noted that Thomas grew more agitated at the beginning of every month and actually left the office fifteen minutes early on the first Tuesday. At last the mystery was solved. Apparently Thomas was rushing off to meet someone. He had a liaison, and the subtle changes noted in him must be due to a romance. Whether this involved a man or woman was anybody's guess. Thomas Kendall had been

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transformed by love, and having agreed upon this banal but reassuring explanation they went back to the usual company gossip and complaints, not giving Thomas and his spurious love life another thought.

They weren't far wrong, however. Thomas did feel as charged as a man in love—a state he had never actually experienced—for he now had a reason to go home at night, a presence in his house that stimulated and amused him, brought excitement, pleasure, and at times the stirrings of fear. Thomas had *The Cain Chronicle*—seven issues of which were now fanned about his coffee table like a display of rare gemstones. There they lay, ready for his ongoing perusal, his interest in them never waning no matter how many times he reread them. And always there was the first Tuesday of the month, when Thomas would rush home early and open his mailbox to find another copy of the magazine, thick, heavy, and shiny with promise.

Each issue was at least 700 pages long—some numbered over a thousand—and all of the issues were crammed with diagrams, photographs, and highly detailed articles that often sent Thomas to the library during his lunch hour, a paperback dictionary and legal pads in his briefcase. After only a few months, he felt as though he had gone through an intensive graduate course on weaponry as each month another facet of aggression was scrutinized at length.

Thomas regarded himself differently now. He saw the world as a different sort of place, filled with dangerous corners beyond which lay a glittering darkness. He now knew things, some of them nearly unspeakable, that others didn't, pondered information which many others surely weren't privy to. What significance had ballock knives or Frankish throwing axes, Lugers, amatol explosives, or four-barreled derringers held for him before? And what had he known of those numberless men and women—warriors, assassins, killers—who had wiped the blood off such weapons and successfully avoided retribution or the close scrutiny of history?

He never stopped to ask himself why he had been chosen as a reader. Some part of his mind refused to examine the question too clearly for fear he would discern something unpleasant and ineradicable, like the first symptoms of a deadly disease. And he certainly never thought to share his good fortune with anyone else. The magazines were for him alone, a gift that was as private and mysterious as Thomas Kendall himself.

When his trial offer ran out, Thomas didn't hesitate to sign up for a three-year subscription. He couldn't imagine going back to a time

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when his life was nothing more than answering phones at the office and listening to Handel tapes. Three years! Thomas would have subscribed for life!

On the first Tuesday of December, someone rang Thomas's doorbell. This wasn't unusual in itself. An occasional intruder bearing religious leaflets would venture onto his front porch or a fearless child would knock, vainly attempting to sell candy or cookies for some school athletic team. But it was 10:00 P.M. on a snowy Tuesday night, and even had Thomas not been such a reclusive soul the prospect of a visitor at such an hour would have been unexpected.

At first he was so engrossed in the latest issue of *The Cain Chronicle* he almost thought he must have imagined the sound of the doorbell until it chimed again twenty seconds later. It occurred to him that he could ignore it, let whoever it was stand shivering in the cold while he continued to read. A year ago he would have done just that, but he had grown more curious, more willing to investigate since then, so he decided to answer the door, making certain to first gather up all the issues of the *Chronicle* on his coffee table and shove them deep in the recesses of his mother's armoire which loomed in the hallway.

Turning on the porch light, he lifted the curtain covering the small window in the door and saw a woman staring calmly back at him, snowflakes covering her lashes and the blue scarf wrapped about her head.

"Hello, Mr. Kendall," she said quietly as soon as the door opened.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Susan Jones," she replied in the same even voice. "From *The Cain Chronicle*. May I come in?"

It took only an instant for Thomas to recall that Susan Jones was one of the contributing editors of *The Cain Chronicle*, and she had written several of his favorite articles—most notably that first intriguing piece on the "FS" knife. Having her appear before him like this was almost like seeing the *Chronicle* become flesh.

Wordlessly, he stepped aside and ushered her inside with the air of someone who was greeting a royal personage. It wouldn't have occurred to him that she shouldn't be invited in, for having welcomed *The Cain Chronicle* into his life he also welcomed those who were a part of it.

Not until she had seated herself in his faded Louis Quinze chair, her coat, scarf, and gloves placed neatly on a nearby ottoman and

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a briefcase resting on her lap, did Thomas manage to say, "I think *The Cain Chronicle* is a fine magazine." He sat on the couch facing her. "I can't tell you how much I look forward to receiving each new issue. The writing is excellent and the extent of the research is astounding."

"Thank you." A hint of a smile played about the corners of her mouth. Thomas, who guessed she was at least fifty years old, was struck by how relaxed she seemed at finding herself alone with a strange man on a snowy night. "It's always gratifying to write for a receptive audience," she went on. "The *Chronicle*, as you should know, is noted for its discerning and appreciative readership."

"Actually, there's much about the *Chronicle* I don't know." Thomas hunched forward and clasped his hands before him. He was surprised to hear the emotion in his voice. "I'm very grateful I was offered a subscription to your magazine, that I was somehow chosen to be a reader, but I don't understand how or why that was. I'm on no mailing list that I know of."

"Oh, but you are."

He stared intently at her. "I'm a very private man. I've spent my adult life maintaining a distance from the rest of the world. No one comes to this house, no one writes me letters. I make no phone calls unrelated to business and I throw all useless mail away. Yours is the first magazine offer I've received in nearly two years. And it's such an unusual magazine. I've combed the newsstands and libraries—there's nothing else comparable to the scope and content of the *Chronicle*. It's not even listed in the Reader's Guide."

"You have been thorough." Now she did indeed smile. "But most of our readers are."

"Why?" he asked. "Why me?"

"All of our subscribers match a particular profile, Mr. Kendall." The woman snapped open her briefcase. "They are very much as you describe yourself: private, nearly invisible individuals respected by the community but unobtrusive. Hard-working, responsible. Most are unmarried and all are extremely intelligent." She pulled out a leather portfolio. "Your IQ, for example, is 145—that's about average for the *Chronicle*. We have found, however, that such high intelligence quotients are often extremely underutilized. Let's consider your own situation, Mr. Kendall. Taking orders for colanders and water glasses cannot possibly provide as much mental stimulation as you require."

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"I always wanted to go to college, but I had neither the time nor the money," he said.

"Yes, your parents were quite ill and our records show that you took care of them until they died," she said dispassionately, looking over the sheaf of papers she had pulled from the briefcase.

"They died within six months of each other," Thomas nearly whispered. He thought to himself, Records? What records?

"You were only twenty-two years old and found yourself in debt." She set the papers on her now closed briefcase. "$118,045.78, to be exact." She paused. "Your parents had no medical insurance."

"I couldn't go to college. I had no choice in the matter. I needed the money and working had to take precedence."

"And so you have worked, Mr. Kendall," she nodded. "You've worked diligently for six years in customer service at the restaurant-supply company, and you are paying off your parents' debts year by year. Most commendable. You have only $102,014.06 left to pay. Maybe you'll live long enough to finally pay it off."

"That's enough," he said, assertiveness in his voice now. Another woman might have begun to feel afraid. "What do you want?"

"We want you to remain a *Cain Chronicle* reader," she replied calmly. "You are ideally suited for us."

"Why?" he asked again. "Why me?"

"You killed your brother, Mr. Kendall," she replied serenely. "You drowned your brother Peter when you were thirteen years old. In Lake Missipauga the summer your family vacationed in Minnesota. He was twelve. A sweet, trusting boy from all accounts, who lacked both your intellectual capacity and your calculating resolve. Not a very formidable opponent, really—but then you were quite young yourself, weren't you?"

Thomas groaned and put his head in his hands. All he had tried to hide from these past fifteen years was now sitting across from him in the shape of this middle-aged woman with salt-and-pepper hair, this woman smiling coldly at his dismay as she calmly tore down the protective barriers he had so carefully built up.

"The police records claimed it was an accidental drowning, but your parents knew how violently jealous you had always been of your brother." Her tone was bored, as though she had recited similar accusations many times. "The killing broke your parents' hearts, not to mention their health. It was only two weeks after your brother's funeral when your father suffered his first heart attack.

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And your mother, never very strong to begin with, also started to decline."

"I took care of them," he said more to himself than to the woman. "I worked odd jobs in high school, then rushed home to cook their meals and clean the house. I drove them to the clinic and bought their medicine—and still I had to listen to their endless crying and recriminations. I barely had time to write a high-school term paper, let alone prepare for college, and I certainly had no time to make friends or even begin to date." He looked at her pleadingly. "I made amends the only way I could. And I swore I'd pay off all their debts." His voice hardened. "As I have paid off mine all these years."

"Yes, guilt often prompts rather remarkable behavior." The woman leaned back in the chair. She was silent for a moment and the sound of crunching snow could be heard as a car drove down the street outside.

"There's nothing you can do to me!" he burst out suddenly. "I was a minor: there were no witnesses except for some drunken old man the police never believed!"

"Please, Thomas," she interrupted. "May I call you Thomas?" She didn't wait for an answer. "We're not interested in the triviality of blackmail. We're interested in you, in your intelligence and relentless efficiency, your ability to cloak the past, to lead a hidden life, and to carry out long-range plans. And you're such an exemplary reader, Thomas. The *Chronicle* has need of people like you."

"For what possible purpose?"

"We need killers," she said as simply as if she had requested a cup of tea. "Oh, not the hothead sort, easily provoked to violence. We need men and women who can keep their heads, who can calculate risks and destroy without losing that essential inner coldness of character. Shaky hands and a lack of self-control would never do."

"I can't believe any of this," he replied even as the truth of it rang in his ears. "How can you know these things about me? Who could you possibly have talked to about me? I have no family, no friends. Why, I barely exist! How can all this be happening? This is my fault for being so foolish these past few months. I should have known when I received the magazine for the first time! I should have turned it in at once to the police, forced them to go to the *Chronicle* office and question the editorial staff!"

"Why? What could the police have done?" She smiled at his confusion. "Our address changes on a regular basis. We cannot be tracked down even by professionals. It's been tried. Rest assured

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that we never send out a complimentary copy of *The Cain Chronicle* without thoroughly investigating a potential reader. You'd be shocked to know how long you've been under observation by our people, Thomas. Only when we were absolutely certain of your character, your dependability, when we knew you far better than you perhaps know yourself did we send the magazine. But still we waited."

"For what?" he asked hoarsely.

"To see how you would react, of course. Once in a great while we discover that we have miscalculated regarding a personality. But not in your case. You stayed up all night reading that first issue. You posted your acceptance of a trial subscription at 8:46 the following morning at the mailbox on the corner of Warren and Hayes. Every first Tuesday of the month thereafter you took the unprecedented step of leaving work early in order to receive the latest issue—a foolish thing to do, by the way: it attracts attention. When the trial period ran out, you promptly subscribed for three years. You have told no one about this obviously dangerous magazine. You frequently spend your lunch hour researching the more provocative articles. You—"

"Stop!" he said sharply. "That's enough! I accept your claim that I've been watched for perhaps half of my lifetime. There's nothing I can do about that now. And I should have guessed. Maybe I have. Maybe I have known all along what the magazines were preparing me for."

"You've had a year of selective training," she affirmed. "What amounts to a correspondence course in killing. Couple this technical knowledge with your own gift for murder which was displayed at such an early age, Thomas, and you can see the possibilities."

"*The Cain Chronicle*," he said quietly. "Have all your readers murdered a brother, then?"

Her laughter rang out but there was no humor in it. "That *would* make us an exclusive group!" she said. "No, as you have ascertained, the name Cain was indeed selected in honor of the first legendary murderer. The fact that he killed his brother, however, is sheer coincidence in your case. Our readers are marked only by having deliberately taken a life. Who they killed is of secondary importance."

"And they continue to kill—for the *Chronicle*," he stated.

"We provide an exclusive service," she said with quiet authority. "Our clients require the destruction of their enemies for a variety

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of reasons, some of which may strike you as almost noble. Of course, many are killed as a result of rather commonplace motives: greed, revenge, jealousy. But why you kill is not as important as how and who you kill. We are paid extremely well for our expertise, and you will become a member of a hidden elite, Thomas, whose effect on human events might cause you to tremble."

"I don't tremble easily," he said curtly. "And what if I refuse? What if I simply tell you to take your magazines and get out?"

"Once your subscription has expired you may do what you like," she said, glancing down at her papers again. "Please remember that you did subscribe for three years. After that time you will be a free agent and may leave the *Chronicle* without a qualm, and with quite a bit more money than you have now. Of course, you may also choose to renew your subscription at that time—most readers work with us a minimum of fifteen years. Our record is actually quite impressive." She paused. "You may be interested to know that *The Cain Chronicle* has been publishing for nearly a century."

"I'll ask again," he said. "What if I refuse to have anything more to do with the *Chronicle*?"

"Then you would become a canceled subscription," she said, looking intently at him.

"Canceled?"

"Irrevocably."

They both fell silent for a time. The woman waited calmly as Thomas sorted through his conflicting emotions.

"Who am I supposed to kill, Susan?" he asked finally. "May I call you Susan? Of course I may, even though that isn't your real name, is it?"

She smiled and studied the papers on her briefcase. "This will take some time to go over with you," she said. "A first assignment always needs a good deal of preparation. *You* may choose the method of killing, of course, but you will have to be guided by us in all other pertinent matters. Don't become discouraged, however. In time, although a complete dossier on your designated target will be sent to you, everything else will be left to your professional discretion. But for now I'm afraid you must operate with constraints."

"I may choose the method of killing?" he asked suddenly.

She nodded. "You have a preference."

"In that first issue, the one concerned with daggers," he said, unable to keep the eagerness out of his voice, "you wrote about a weapon that captured my attention—"

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"The Fairbairn-Sykes," she interrupted. "Also known as the Fighting Knife or Commando Knife. Your personality profile indicated such a choice." She snapped open the briefcase. "I, too, have a fondness for blades. Perhaps you'd care to look at one close up before making a final decision?"

"You have one with you?" he asked, genuinely amazed.

"I carry a number of weapons with me at any given time, Thomas." She removed a slender object resting in a black-leather scabbard. "The world is a dangerous place, after all, and—" she hesitated a moment "—you might have proven difficult."

Thomas sat forward in anticipation. He was having difficulty breathing and suddenly found himself looking at her in gratified silence. The world indeed was a dangerous place filled with dangerous people, he thought as he stared into her eyes. How immensely satisfying it was to admit at last that he was one of them.

The woman cleared her throat and began to speak marvelous things, and Thomas Kendall knew with mounting excitement that it was time to draw the dagger.

ON OUR COVER

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in nearby Willowick, Bob Golic, a mainstay on the Los Angeles Raiders' defensive line, has enjoyed a distinguished career both on and off the field. The son of a Canadian Football League veteran, Golic attended Notre Dame University, where he capped a celebrated college career by being named Defensive MVP in the Cotton Bowl. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Golic was drafted in the second round by the New England Patriots.

After two years in New England, Golic returned home and became a star for the Cleveland Browns. He was honored by being named to the Pro Bowl each of the three years following what he called his "de-evolution" from linebacker to nose tackle in 1983. Now in his first year with the Raiders, he continues to prove his abilities while forced to play the remainder of his career with a five-inch plate in his right arm. He and his wife Jackie make their home in Manhattan Beach, Florida.

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a *NEW* Inspector Donoghue story by

PETER TURNBULL

Newly fitted burglar alarms above the door, locks on the windows. A notice which implied the presence of a Doberman. He went away, went back to his rooms and slept badly. The next night he returned and sat on the step at the front door, knowing she was inside, just a few feet away, and he savored the memory of the power he had once held and exercised inside the house, reliving it so far as he was able. He left when the milk float rattled into the street. And returned the next night, and the next.

A chilling addition to Peter Turnbull's powerful series of Glasgow police procedurals. Continue to watch for his novels, published here by St. Martin's Press . . .

THE FOURTH NIGHT

by PETER TURNBULL

The man sat on the step to the front door of the house. He sat and was doing nothing but sitting, quite simply sitting there. Occasionally he smoked a cigarette. He had arrived at the house, padding silently through the sleeping, leafy, early-summer suburbs in the western spread of the city of Glasgow at half past midnight and he intended to sit at the door of the house until the milk float rattled into the street. When he heard the milk float whine and rattle, he would stand, pad silently down the path to the street, into the main thoroughfare, and catch a bus. Just like he had done on the previous night and the night before that. And the night before that.

He had come to begin to get to know the street on this, the fourth night. He knew that in the shrubs to his left there lived a hedgehog. He had heard it shuffling, then it had left the shrubs, crossed the

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path, run onto the lawn, through the hedgerow, and into the neighboring garden. Later in the night it returned, passing from right to left in front of where the man sat.

Opposite, across the street, lived a man who evidently had a job which involved working unsocial hours. On the first night that the man had sat on the step, he had observed the second man halting his car across the street at about quarter past one. The second man had slumped forward onto the steering wheel and the observer on the step assumed him to be drunk, and as he watched he threw away his cigarette with its giveaway glow. The driver had slowly raised his head, shaken it, and reached for a jacket, left his car, and walked into the house opposite and to the right of where the man sat on the step. Then the observer had realized that the other man was not drunk, but exhausted. On the second night, he arrived home at twenty past one, equally obviously tired. By the third night, the sitter on the step didn't light a cigarette until the man with the job with unsocial hours arrived home. Then he smoked his first cigarette, smoking two or three an hour, keeping the butts safe in an old tobacco tin, insuring that he left no indication of his having sat on the step for six hours, leaving only when the dawn cracked and the milk float whined and rattled into the street.

Five nights earlier the man had turned off the main thoroughfare, prowling into the suburb in soft-soled shoes and dark, casual clothing, drawn by some homing instinct to the site of the conquest, the site which the police subsequently termed the "locus of the offense." He had enjoyed this particular conquest more, much much more, than he had enjoyed the others.

In the early days, the days when he was learning, running up to women, groping, fondling hurriedly before running away, he thrilled to their screams. As he thought about the incidents, he realized that he thrilled more to the struggle, to the look in their eyes.

Then—what was it, the sixth one? the one after he had returned from Canada—the girl he had cornered in a garage, she was the breakthrough. As always he had said nothing, but he had held the knife, twisting it in his hand so it caught and reflected the light from the streetlamp as it shone in through the window.

The girl quaked in terror.

He said nothing.

He twisted the knife in his hand and thrilled to her terror. He wanted it to last forever, her terror.

The girl had begun to remove her clothing clumsily, weeping as

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she did so, and he had stifled a laugh—a laugh of enjoyment, but he stifled it because it was vital that he leave no clue to his identity. The mask hid his face and he wore thin rubber washing-up gloves—he didn't want to leave fingerprints or have the forensic scientist dig under his fingernails for shreds of highly incriminating human flesh, hair, or smears of cosmetic. And when the time came, he would fumble with a condom because he knew he could be identified by genetic fingerprinting techniques should he deposit semen.

He was careful that the girl should not struggle, because he knew that the same techniques could be used to identify him from a single strand of his hair or a flake of skin scratched from his face. He then got the final, sweating act over with as quickly as he could. The act itself gave him no pleasure, none at all. What he thrilled to was the helplessness, the terror, the sheer fear of his victim. This he prolonged as long as he could. If he was able to, he would have prolonged it forever. But he had to go through with the distasteful final act and get it over with because unless he carried it all the way, there was no point in inducing the terror in the first place.

The terror lay in knowing what was going to happen and from which there was no escape—not in what *might* happen, because then there *was* hope. Real terror comes when all hope is lost: and this the man knew.

Later, after the girl in the garage—whom he had left a naked whimpering heap curled up on a pile of oily sacks—when the urge came upon him, triggered by the sight of a flurry of activity on a playing field, the gleam of hockey sticks in the rain preceding a headlong tumble in the mud, or, in the summer, a striding flash of elongated thigh in the hurdle race, he stopped prowling, he stopped being an opportunist, and began to stalk his victim. He identified her, singled her out from a crowd, followed her, and kept watch on her house, waiting for the right moment to strike.

He had walked past the house in the suburbs and seen her reaching to draw the curtains shut, and thrilled to a glimpse of her arching back and the smooth flow of her movements before she was hidden from view by a sheet of grey. She was much younger than many of her neighbors, for this suburb was a prestigious area, one he could never aspire to, and he thought her the daughter of the householder, or a woman who had married an older, established professional.

Over the following days, he returned, walking past her house, wanting another glimpse of her. Often he saw her. Always she was alone. He followed her when she left the house and walked behind

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her to the row of shops that stood at the end of the street at the junction with the main thoroughfare. He followed her into a Pakistani-owned grocer's and drew close enough to glance at her hands. No rings.

He stood behind her as she chatted amiably with the shopkeeper. Her voice was deep, husky, reverberating, profoundly sexual.

He continued to watch her. Once every ten days or so, triggered by the sight of youthful, physical activity on the playing fields, he would be overcome with the urge to see her. And he wouldn't rest until he had seen her.

He went to the public library and consulted the voters' roll. The woman's name was Louisa Younghusband and she lived alone in her huge house.

A Tuesday afternoon, early in the summer—an expanse of green, a blazing sun. The man glanced up and saw a striding thigh and tightly clasping running shorts that he thought more in keeping with swimwear than with conventional athletic wear. He then knew that that night he would induce great terror in Louisa Younghusband.

She had been his seventh victim. And his most enjoyable. The silently forced entry into her home, the creeping up the stairs, the pause as one stair creaked. Then standing at the foot of her bed, waiting for her to wake, as even in sleep she would eventually become aware of his presence. The joy of the sudden and prolonged terror that he had made last for five delicious hours, loving the sense of power in his veins, the cat-and-mouse act, the pleadings, the slow backing away toward the door, the gasping of breath as hope rose in Louisa Younghusband, the pause at the door, his turning back to the trembling victim, the floods of tears as her hope vanished again. Five long, beautiful, delicious hours.

Then he did it, quickly, clumsily. Now in a sense they were both victims, it was something they both had to go through. The real joy was the power game.

He returned to the house of Louisa Younghusband. He didn't want to. He needed to. Something drove him to go back—a hunger.

For six weeks he resisted.

Then one afternoon he watched a sixth-former sweep gracefully over the high jump and that night, a balmy, calm night in June, he returned to the house, creeping through the high-summer foliage, past the two-car garages, the U-shaped driveways, the neatly clipped lawns with birdbaths, the hose pipes still hissing in the dark.

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Newly fitted burglar alarms above the door, locks on the windows. A notice which implied the presence of a Doberman. He went away, went back to his rooms and slept badly. The next night he returned and sat on the step at the front door, knowing she was inside, just a few feet away, and he savored the memory of the power he had once held and exercised inside the house, reliving it so far as he was able. He left when the milk float rattled into the street. And returned the next night, and the next.

Now he sat, savoring the power of the fourth night.

"Would have gone right past him, Sarge." Hamilton scratched his forehead as he consulted his notebook. "I checked the windows, shone my torch on them, and saw a black mound in the doorway. I thought it was a binliner full of domestic refuse. Then it moved."

"I see." Sussock sat back in his chair and glanced at the clock on the wall: 0301.

"He didn't try to run. He just sat there, looking into my torch beam."

"Why were you checking the house in the first place?"

"It's the house of Miss Younghusband, Sarge."

"The masked rapist—" Sussock sat up "—a month, six weeks ago."

"That's the one, sir. It's on my beat, so I make a point of checking it when I can. It's in a quiet part of the patch, so I can only get to it if circumstances permit. This is the first night this week that I've been able to take a walk up there. So anyway, there he was, trapped in the beam of my torch. I pulled him on suspicion. I thought he was either mentally ill or up to no good. So I felt his collar."

"Has he said anything?"

"Not a lot. He was reluctant to give his name at first. I told him there was no way he was leaving the police station until I got a name and address I could verify. He reckoned that we couldn't hold him for sitting on a step, so I told him that unless I got a name and an address I'd do him for obstructing the police in the course of their duties. I told him that if I did that, it would get him into the court system and if he refused to give his name and address to the Sheriff, he was looking at twenty-one days' detention and a further appearance, and that cycle of twenty-one days and an appearance would go on until the end of his life or until he chose to tell us who he was, whichever was soonest. So he gave his name as Justin Moffat."

"Moffat. My car broke down in Moffat once," said Sussock, absentmindedly, remembering the days when his life was glowing—a

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new young wife, love, an open two-seater. The days before it all fell apart, before he had to move away from home into a bed-sitting room. "As you get older, you accumulate more stories, like the ones about cars breaking down. You won't have been born then, laddie."

"No, sir."

"So, we have one Justin Moffat."

"He's a teacher, Sarge, aged thirty-six."

"Any previous? Be doubtful if he's a teacher."

"Scottish Criminal Records Office check was negative, Sarge. No form at all. Clean as a new pin."

"Where does he live?"

"Mount Vernon Academy."

"That's a fee-paying girls' school?"

"Yes, Sarge."

"I don't like the sound of this man," said Sussock, and as he spoke Hamilton, standing, noted the lines in Sussock's forehead, the silver hair, the strain telling on an old man doing a young man's job. "Men do teach at girls' schools, but they're few and far between. And what teacher walks out in the wee small hours and sits on the front step of a house where a woman was raped just a few weeks ago?"

"I don't like it, either, sir." Hamilton shuffled his feet. "I remember when Miss Younghusband was attacked, it being on my beat. I made a point of looking at the file. There's a series of unsolved sex attacks in Glasgow involving a small man in a black mask. I've asked for it to be sent up to you, sir."

"Good man."

Alone in his office, Sussock read the file. He found that Hamilton's memory had served him well. Of the sex attacks that had taken place in Glasgow in recent years, seven could be isolated as most probably being committed by the same man, a small man in a black mask, a woollen balaclava with holes for eyes and mouth, which could be bought easily, worn once, and discarded. A man who also had worn thin washing-up gloves, again easily and cheaply bought, worn once, and discarded. A man who was youthful, able to move silently and quickly. A man who always fumbled with a condom. (Not many rapists are so considerate.)

A man who never spoke, but indicated his wishes with the assistance of a knife. A man who in later attacks kept the victim waiting in a state of terror for the final ordeal. A man who played games, letting the victim believe that she may be spared after all, walking away, then stopping and returning. The attacks occurred

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on average once every six to nine months, except for a noticeable gap of eighteen months when no such attack was reported, that period ending nine months ago, on a night when a girl was raped in a garage and was found, still shaking with fear, the following afternoon, still curled up on a pile of oily rags.

Then, six weeks ago, Louisa Younghusband was attacked in the house in which she had grown up as a girl, the house that she had inherited from her father.

So much for hard facts. Sussock turned his attention to the commentary. The commentary drew attention to the use of gloves and condom and noted that their use frustrated identification of the attacker by forensic methods, just as the mask frustrated identification by straightforward visual recognition. The commentary speculated that the attacker might have scientific knowledge or training. The attacker never spoke and there was further speculation in the commentary that this might indicate a desire on the part of the attacker to conceal a regional accent or a speech defect which otherwise might serve to identify him.

Interesting, said Sussock to himself. He reached forward and picked up the telephone. He dialed a two-figure internal number.

"Control," replied a crisp voice.

"D. S. Sussock." Sussock sat back in his chair. "Has the domicile of the man Moffat been verified yet, please?"

"Yes, sir. Tango Delta Foxtrot called a few minutes ago. Justin Moffat has rooms at Mount Vernon Academy where he is principal science teacher."

"A science teacher," Sussock echoed.

"Yes, sir."

"Right. Can you find P.C. Hamilton for me, please," said Sussock. "He's somewhere in the building. Have him meet me in the interview room."

Justin Moffat was a small man. Sussock thought him to be about five and a half feet tall. Dark-haired. A serious expression, but Sussock could detect no look of fear or trepidation. Sussock sat opposite him. P. C. Hamilton stood behind Sussock. Sussock stretched forward and switched on the tape recorder. Twin tapes began to turn.

"T-T-tape-recorded interview?" said Moffat.

"That's right," Sussock growled. "If we charge you, then you get one, we keep the other. If we don't charge you, we scrub both. The

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time is four-ten A.M. on the tenth of June. Present in the interview are Mr. Justin Moffat, P.C. Hamilton, and myself, Detective Sergeant Sussock."

Moffat sat back in the chair and smiled.

"You were brought to the police station on suspicion of loitering with intent."

"W-w-w-was I?"

"Yes."

"But n-n-n-not arrested?"

"Not yet."

"Yet?" He was an Englishman, by his accent.

"No," said Sussock. "Not yet. What were you doing sitting on the step of that house at three o'clock in the morning?"

"S-s-sitting on the s-s-step."

"Yes. What were you doing?"

"S-s-sitting on the s-s-step. That's it—j-just sitting."

"Why that step?"

"Why n-n-not?"

Sussock breathed deeply. He could breathe deeply during the summer when the air was thicker. This interview he knew was not going to be easy. If he charged Moffat with loitering with intent, he couldn't then nail him with intent to ravish. And because he was sitting quite openly on the step and not lurking in the shrubs, a good lawyer could convince a jury that he was acting strangely because of a period of distress or crisis and meant no harm. A Not Guilty verdict, as sure as eggs are eggs.

"Where were you, say, eighteen months ago?"

"C-C-Canada."

"Oh?"

"I w-went there for an eighteen-month period on an exchange program. A Canadian teacher came to Scotland for the same period."

"You teach at a girls' school?"

"Y-yes."

"Why not a boys' school?"

"I can't control b-boys and I l-like the Academy."

"Why?"

"Old-fashioned. T-t-toughens them up. Sports t-twice a week, gym every day. No excuse except illness. I've seen them c-come in from the playing fields s-suffering from hypothermia."

"And?"

"P-p-produces winners. Y-yes, I like th-th-that."

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"What do you teach?"

"C-chemist-t-try."

"When did you start attacking women?"

"I don't," he said calmly.

"You attack women. You rape them, Moffat. You know that and I know that. You wear a mask and you never speak so that you can't be identified by your accent and stammer."

"You've g-g-got the wr-wr-wrong man."

"You use gloves, washing-up gloves. No fingerprints, no flesh or hair under your fingernails."

Moffat remained silent.

"And you use a condom—that is, when you finally get around to doing it. No semen traces that can be linked to you."

The man remained silent. A self-assured sort of silence.

"You throw away the mask, gloves, used condom—maybe destroy them in an incinerator."

"I t-try not t-to throw anything away. I-I'm a natural m-m-magpie."

"What will we find if we turn your room over?"

"R-rooms," said Moffat. "Rooms. I h-have th-three rooms at the Academy. Sh-should you search m-my rooms—wi-with a warrant, of course—you will f-find n-nothing that w-would embarrass or sh-shame me."

"We'll see."

Moffat looked worried.

"You look worried," said Sussock.

"W-w-wouldn't you b-b-be? If someone was g-going to search y-your home? W-wouldn't you be w-worried?"

"My home," said Sussock. He thought of his room, the single bed, the chair. The noise from the other rooms. "You'll stay here. You're being detained for further questioning."

"W-where are you g-going?"

"To search your rooms."

"D-do you have a w-warrant?"

"We'll get one."

"I'll h-have to see a c-copy."

"No, you won't. The headmistress will. It's not your property."

"H-hurry up, w-will you. I'm t-teaching second period."

Sussock and Hamilton searched Moffat's rooms, old and collegiate, stone walls, narrow windows looking out across the playing fields,

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at present covered in an early-morning mist. They opened every drawer, every door, and every cupboard under the disapproving eye of a senior house mistress representing the headmistress. They found nothing that would incriminate Justin Moffat.

"Didn't think that we would," said Sussock as he and Hamilton drove back to the city. "He's clever, very clever. Does what he wants to do but never leaves anything that can tie him to an incident."

"Clever," repeated Hamilton, watching the city awaken around him. "Clever and dangerous."

Back in the interview room, Sussock switched on the tape recorder. "Where were you on the night of the second of May?"

"H-h-haven't a clue," smiled Justin Moffat.

"What about the night of the nineteenth of October last year?"

"Even less idea," said Moffat. "Is th-there s-s-something significant about th-th-those dates?"

"On the nineteenth of October, you raped Caroline Hood in a garage in Bridgeton."

"N-no, I didn't."

"She was young enough to be one of your pupils. Can you prove that you didn't harm her? Do you have an alibi?"

"I don't have to prove I didn't harm her. You have to prove that I did. Th-the burden of p-proof rests with y-you. I am innocent until p-proven otherwise. And, I emphasize, p-proven."

"You sound as though you have something to hide."

"Do I?"

"Have you?"

"Wh-what?"

"Got something to hide?"

"Well, that's for me t-to know."

"And for me to find out. Don't tell me."

"You can't hold me for much longer without charging me."

Sussock ignored the statement, but he was nonetheless acutely aware of the minutes ticking by. "You see, Mr. Moffat, our problem is that we have a string of attacks on women, attacks of a sexual nature, carried out by a man of your weight and build, who never spoke during the attacks, perhaps to conceal an identifying accent or speech impediment, who is probably scientifically knowledgeable and is intelligent. The attacks took place on a regular basis of about one every six months, but ceased for an eighteen-month period which coincides with your eighteen-month-long visit to Canada as an ex-

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change teacher. The attacks started again when you returned. Not only that, we find you sitting on the front doorstep of one of your victims—your last, in fact."

"My v-v-victim?"

"I've been a cop for a long time," said Sussock. "I can tell you that it's a truism that a criminal will return to the scene of his crime. He is drawn to it. It holds a fascination for him."

"Th-th-that so?" said Justin Moffat. "Is th-th-that right? Th-that's fascinating, but I'm teaching second period."

Sussock glanced at his watch. "We can hang onto you a bit longer. There's someone I'd like you to meet."

Inspector Fabian Donoghue arrived at P Division from his home in Edinburgh at eight-thirty. At eight-thirty-two he was pulling on a pipe, listening attentively to Ray Sussock, who felt tired and grimy in the presence of the clean, shaved, rested, smartly dressed Inspector who was almost twenty years his junior.

"I think you're right, Ray," said Donoghue. "Moffat's our man. I also think you're right that we can't charge him because we have no concrete evidence. How long can we hold him for?"

"Five more minutes, sir."

"Right. I'll escort him from the station myself. Have a chat with him as I do so."

"Very good, sir."

On the steps of the police station, Donoghue and Moffat stood talking.

"Will you do it again?" asked Donoghue.

Moffat turned. "N-n-no," he said. "In fact, now you're closing in, I might leave the city. Get b-back t-to England. T-time to b-b-buy a house and p-plant potatoes."

"So, it was you."

Moffat nodded. "I w-won't admit it in f-f-front of a witness. I won't admit it in so m-many words, anyway."

"Your cards are marked, Mr. Moffat. It would be best for you to leave Glasgow because we'll pull you on suspicion each time a girl gets raped—in the middle of the night, in the middle of a class, doesn't matter when. We'll pull you. We'll be seeing each other again."

"Perhaps," said Moffat, stepping forward to hail an approaching taxi. "Maybe I'll qu-qu-quit while I'm ahead."

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"Well, you'll never know how far ahead you are," said Donoghue as the "fast black" squealed to a halt. "You're only ahead until the minute you're not ahead. The files are kept open, we know you're the man, it's just a question of getting the slightest shred of evidence, or waiting until scientific methods have developed sufficiently to enable us to link you to the crimes."

Moffat's eyes narrowed. He was suddenly frightened.

"It works both ways," Donoghue pressed his point home. "The importance of corroborative evidence or the need for an independent witness has worked to your advantage, but remember that in the U.K. there's no such thing as a Statute of Limitation. I'll tell you a story. An eighteen-year-old youth stabbed another, killed him, and ran. He left the knife and a good set of prints, but we had no record of his prints so the trail ran cold. No witnesses, either. Twenty years later there was a theft at a school—"

"A school."

"Scientific equipment worth thousands of pounds went missing. It all pointed to an inside job, so the teaching staff fell under suspicion."

"A-and?"

"And we fingerprinted the staff, ran the prints through the computer, and—guess what?"

"They m-matched up."

"That's it. The hot-headed eighteen-year-old who murdered someone and then scurried away into the night went on to university, entered the teaching profession just like you, and when we caught up with him he was by then a thirty-eight-year-old head of department, wife, couple of kids, mortgage. He went down for life for a murder he committed twenty years ago."

Moffat's eyes again narrowed.

"Not only that, but when I say 'we,' I mean the police nationally, not just the Glasgow police. By the time we caught him, he was teaching in Cornwall and was brought back to Glasgow for trial. He's now breaking rocks in the granite quarries of Peterhead Prison. If you don't believe me, you can visit him. A guy called Pratt."

Donoghue smiled. "On you go, Mr. Moffat. Your meter's ticking."

"Q"

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Tadao hadn't the slightest inkling why Mitsuko would leave home. She hadn't given any indication she was going to. Surely, then, she was missing not of her own free will but as a result of some factor beyond her control . . .

BEYOND ALL SUSPICION

by SEICHO MATSUMOTO

Dear Mr. ———

I've left out the name because I'm still debating who to send this to. I might address it to the police in charge of criminal investigations. Or maybe a suitable lawyer. Or perhaps I'll just leave it blank. I'll only be able to decide when I finish.

I'm not even sure whether this is a letter or a diary. The style is far too straightforward for a letter. But addressing it to someone is not appropriate in a diary, either. Of course, by combining elements of both, perhaps I'm creating something altogether different.

First of all, I need to recount what happened seven years ago, in April 1950.

At the time, I was thirty-one years old and working in Tokyo in M. Bank, one of the major Japanese banks. I was single, I lacked for nothing, and I enjoyed life. I had the usual expectations for my future.

I lived with my younger sister in a rented house on the outskirts of Asagaya. I don't know what it's like now, but in those days the neighborhood still had small patches of woodland and if you took a deep breath you could almost smell the plains of Musashi. Every day I would commute to work in a happy frame of mind.

My sister, Mitsuko, was twenty-seven at the time. She had married at nineteen, but had had the bad luck to lose her husband just as the war was about to end. I was her only sibling, so I took her in. Luckily she didn't have any children. If a good match could be found, I wanted her to remarry, and I was directly on the lookout for her.

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My sister was a cheerful person who used to sing while cleaning the kitchen and doing the wash. I'd often scold her for making such a racket. As I approached the house on my way back from work, I could make out such songs as "Riru's Back from Shanghai." This song was getting popular then and was a favorite of hers. If Kasaoka from the bank were with me, I'd feel embarrassed.

"What's wrong with being cheerful?" Kasaoka looked at me and laughed. He was about forty-two at the time—not my direct superior but the chief of another section. Since he lived nearby, we'd often go home together.

"Hey, act your age. You'd better watch it, singing so loudly," I yelled at my sister from the hallway as I slid the door shut behind me.

Mitsuko stuck out her tongue. "Am I really so old?"

"A woman close to thirty is already over the hill."

"You're awful. You don't have to add three years to my age. Why, there are lots of people who call me 'Miss.' "

It was just as she said. Mitsuko looked young, perhaps because of her slight build. Or perhaps because her married life had been cut short. She had a girlish naivete, and bright-colored clothes suited her.

"You'll be the target of jokes if you talk like that. I was with Kasaoka just now and he made an odd face when he heard you singing so loudly."

"Oh, that's impossible. Mr. Kasaoka always compliments me on my voice. He's very friendly. He told me that when he first met me he thought I was twenty or twenty-one."

"Humph. You're really stuck on yourself."

My mood turned sour. My displeasure was directed not just at my sister but also at Kasaoka, who had all of a sudden become so chummy with her. Something was developing behind my back, and no matter how insignificant it might be I didn't like the feeling of being excluded.

Even though Kasaoka was over forty, his dark brows and straight nose gave him an air of vitality. Rumor had it that his stream of women was a cause of anxiety for his wife. I needed to be careful. Thinking that I'd have to warn my sister at the first sign of anything, I was quietly keeping tabs on the situation.

But nothing in particular developed. This being the case, it would have been strange to bring the subject up deliberately. On the contrary, I decided I was worrying needlessly.

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Three months later, at the end of June, Mitsuko spoke to me after breakfast.

"The day after tomorrow is the anniversary of Teruo's death. I haven't been to his grave for a long time—I'd like to make a trip back."

Teruo, Mitsuko's late husband, was from Yamagata Prefecture. Mitsuko hadn't been there for two years.

"Of course you should go. It doesn't do not to go for so long." I gladly gave my consent. I even took out an advance on my salary that day and handed it to Mitsuko.

"It's all right. I don't need much money." She was hesitant about taking it, but I insisted. It occurred to me afterward that she probably really hadn't needed it.

Mitsuko was in fine spirits when she left the following morning. She must have been happy, for she had gotten up very early, while it was still dark, and had been singing her usual "Riru's Back from Shanghai" as she prepared for the trip. This time she sang softly, and I didn't scold her. When I left for work, she accompanied me as far as Shinjuku Station.

"Goodbye."

Standing on the platform, she waved to me when I was inside the packed train heading for Tokyo Station. One side of her face was bright in the summer-morning sun.

That was the last time I saw Mitsuko alive.

Mitsuko had disappeared.

I realized this one week later when I received the reply to the telegram I sent to her former in-laws in Yamagata. It said that Mitsuko had never arrived there. I was stunned.

Just in case, I took the express to Yamagata to confirm that she really wasn't there. The in-laws were worried, too. After some discussion, I decided to notify the police that she was missing once I got back to Tokyo. I wrote down her age, height, weight, a description of the clothes she was wearing when she left, and her distinguishing traits, and I submitted this together with a recent photograph. I was too anxious to sleep at night and kept imagining one horrible possibility after another. Half of me had pinned my hopes on the police search, while the other half had given up. I couldn't believe that the police, who must have much more important cases to deal with, would bother to investigate with any thoroughness.

I hadn't the slightest inkling why Mitsuko would leave home. She

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hadn't given any indication she was going to. Surely, then, she was missing not of her own free will but as a result of some factor beyond her control. I regretted letting her travel alone. True, she was twenty-seven, hardly an age where one needs an escort, and yet it seemed like a terrible oversight on my part not to have gone with her. As the days passed, I could only imagine the worst. I hurriedly subscribed to three newspapers and searched through the local news daily. I was fearful, but I couldn't stop myself from looking.

It must have been around the fourth day after Mitsuko left when on my way to work I ran into Kasaoka, whom I hadn't seen for a while.

"Has your sister gone somewhere?" he asked. "Recently your door has been shut when you're not home."

"She's gone to her hometown."

"Where's that?"

"In Yamagata."

At that time, I still hadn't realized that Mitsuko was missing. We stood shoulder to shoulder, hanging onto the straps in the train, making small talk as we headed for the bank.

When it came out that Mitsuko was missing, Kasaoka expressed his concern. All my colleagues in the bank knew, so there was nothing out of the ordinary in his offer of sympathy.

"How awful about your sister." He spoke in a hushed, anxious tone.

"I appreciate your concern."

"Have you asked the police to put out a search for her?"

"Yes, I've done that already."

"You can't leave it at that. I hear they'll be more thorough if you know somebody higher up," he advised me. "She's such a nice, cheerful girl. Let's hope she returns safely soon," he added by way of comforting me.

On the twenty-first day after she left home—ten days after I requested a police search—I found out what had happened to Mitsuko. The missing person's report had been effective after all.

"We've got a lead from the Y. Police Department in I. Prefecture. It wasn't an unnatural death, so we have no photograph. Will you go there?" asked the officer in charge. The town was in a famous hot-spring area to the north, in the opposite direction from Yamagata.

I hesitated.

"The face, body, and clothing all match. The woman died suddenly

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at a hot-spring inn. As her identity was unknown, she was buried provisionally in the town cemetery."

I decided to go to the town and see for myself. I took the night train and arrived at noon the following day. This hot-spring resort, surrounded by mountains on three sides and with a sparkling river running through the center of it, is celebrated in many folk songs, but it was to become a place of sadness for me. With a clerk from the town office to accompany me, the body was dug up from the provisional graveyard in one corner of the public cemetery. It was definitely Mitsuko. The corpse inside the coffin had decomposed, but not beyond recognition. After I made the identification, the tears came.

Stored elsewhere were her suitcase and handbag that contained her clothing, underwear, and some makeup. Everything I saw had belonged to Mitsuko.

"Is anything missing?" the clerk asked. I checked, but the only thing gone was her name-card holder, which she had always carried in her handbag.

"Her name-card holder isn't there."

The clerk exchanged embarrassed glances with the policemen. Someone pointed out where the identification tag had been ripped off the suitcase. It occurred to me that Mitsuko's handkerchief, embroidered with her initials, was also missing.

At last I learned what had happened. Mitsuko, who had a history of heart trouble, had suffered a sudden heart attack and died in her room at an inn. The attack occurred around five in the morning, and when the doctor rushed over an hour later her heart had already stopped beating.

"She wasn't alone," the clerk said hesitantly. I had already guessed as much, but my face turned red and I wasn't able to look at him.

I went to the inn to make my apologies for the inconvenience her death had caused. The innkeeper and the maids, with looks of embarrassment and pity, told me what had transpired.

Mitsuko and a male companion had checked in at the inn on July 1. That was the day after I parted from her at Shinjuku. She seemed to have come straight from Tokyo. The first evening nothing had happened. Having taken a liking to the place, they stayed another night, and it was at dawn on the second night that the tragic attack occurred.

Once the commotion had begun, the man panicked. After the doctor pronounced her dead and a maid placed a white cloth over her

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face, the man quickly changed into his daytime clothes and dashed out of the inn. He said that he was going to the post office, and the inn people assumed he had gone to send a telegram. In the confusion no one noticed him taking his bag or removing the name-card holder from the woman's handbag. The man never returned.

They had registered under false names. A telegram sent to the address in the register was returned undelivered. The inn could do nothing but have the burial arranged by the town hall.

"What an unfeeling brute." Even now the maids were speaking ill of him.

I was given a detailed description of the man and looked at his handwriting in the inn register. I paid the room charges for both of them along with a tip, and the next day I carried my sister's ashes back to Tokyo.

Yuichi Kasaoka was the vilest man on earth.

Mitsuko was half responsible for allowing herself to be seduced by him, so I'm not blaming him for that. But to run away after Mitsuko's sudden death at the inn was unforgivable. He was probably afraid that this unforeseen accident would expose their affair, first to his wife, then to me and the world at large. For him, Mitsuko's abrupt death had been an unexpected disaster.

I could understand the psychology behind his panicking and running away, but as Mitsuko's brother I couldn't forgive him. Even after her death, she had been abused by him. The baseness of covering his tracks by stealing her name cards and fleeing, leaving her to be buried as an unidentified corpse, made me seethe with anger. It must have been the day after he had run away that he had acted the innocent by deliberately inquiring after my sister's whereabouts. The advice he later gave me about contacting someone higher up in the police had also been just a smoke screen to hide the truth.

Both the description I was given at the inn and the handwriting in the register matched. I secretly glanced over some documents he had written at the bank—his distinctive characters were exactly the same. I found out that he had planned a week's vacation starting July 1 on the pretext of visiting his hometown. Everything tallied.

However, even Kasaoka didn't have the gall to show up at Mitsuko's funeral. Claiming to be indisposed, he sent his wife in his place. The unknowing wife, who had a face like a fox's, prayed before the altar. I had glossed things over by saying that Mitsuko had died at a relative's. My fellow workers had seemed somewhat dubious,

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but I stuck to my story. I wanted to protect her reputation and my own honor. And I had another vague reason in mind.

I bumped into Kasaoka the day I was back at work after the funeral. When I asked him to come with me to the roof, his face grew pale.

There wasn't a soul on the roof. The wind was blowing and the Tokyo streets, bathed in sunlight, spread out below us. Except for the street noises that rose up like the murmur of a distant chorus, everything seemed lifeless.

Kasaoka's face had turned as white as a sheet. I knew it wasn't just the reflection of the harsh sunlight. His features were contorted. When I asked him about his actions in Y. Town, he refused to admit anything. He insisted that he had gone to his hometown in western Japan and not been involved in any way.

I laughed. "In that case, would you mind if I sent for the maids from the inn at Y. to meet you?" I asked. He was silent.

It took some time before he started to own up. The wind was tousling his thinning hair. "Forgive me," he said as a prelude to his confession.

He went on to tell me that his relationship with Mitsuko had become serious two months earlier and they had had five assignations. I was both shocked and angered at my own negligence. For a moment, I even hated Mitsuko for deceiving me. The trip had, of course, been arranged beforehand by the two. I remembered that when I had given Mitsuko the advance on my salary, she was reluctant to accept it. In fact, he had paid for her share of the travel expenses.

I couldn't believe that my sister had been such a loose woman. She was a fairly extroverted person, but one part of her had been level-headed. Her married life had been brief, and after she had lost her husband and come to live with me she rarely went out or saw friends. In short, she had remained sheltered from the world. By contrast, Kasaoka was a real womanizer—it must have been a simple task for him to seduce Mitsuko. I could easily imagine how quickly she had fallen into his clutches.

His story continued. When Mitsuko had had her first painful seizure, the startled Kasaoka was quick to wake up one of the inn employees and send him to fetch a doctor, who for some reason was slow in coming. The attacks got worse and her face turned a dark purple. While the maids ran around in confusion, all he had been able to do was panic. After a while her hands, which had been

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clutching her chest convulsively, stopped moving. But it wasn't until the doctor arrived that Kasaoka realized she was dead.

Kasaoka had never imagined that she would die and he was reduced to a state of shock. His first reaction was fear of the repercussions. His wife mustn't find out. Mitsuko's brother must never know. The people at work had to be kept in the dark. As distraught as he was, he had managed to steal her name-card holder, rip the address tag off her suitcase, and cunningly remove her monogrammed handkerchief before fleeing. At the time he had been able to think of nothing but running away. He had been like one possessed.

"Please forgive me. I was wrong. Hit me as hard as you like." His confession over, Kasaoka's tone turned imploring.

"Hit you?" I stared at him, flabbergasted. His conception of what constituted retribution was completely off the mark.

"Hit me all you want. In return, please don't tell anyone. If word gets out, I'll be ruined. Please, it's all I ask."

What did he mean by "ruined"? That he'd get into trouble if his wife found out? That he'd lose his job at the bank? His bloated egotism left me speechless. His notion that the incident could be settled simply by me hitting him was typical of a man who could lead a woman astray and then abandon her corpse without giving it a second thought.

If he hadn't come up with this cheap and affected "hit me," I might never have wanted to kill him.

I decided to murder Kasaoka. There's no need to go into my thinking in detail. In a nutshell, I detested the man. Of course, my basic motive was revenge for his having abandoned Mitsuko, but my feelings had gone well beyond that. One could say that they had soured and fermented as time passed. This Kasaoka became someone I could no longer allow to live in this world.

I considered various methods of killing him. Murder was no great problem—there are all kinds of ways to commit it. What mattered was coming up with a foolproof method so that I wouldn't be caught. Even if I accomplished my goal, what good would it do if I got caught? Revenge would be taken for my own revenge. I'd only be defeating my purposes.

I read many books on the subject. Criminals generally go to great lengths to hide their crimes. Yet despite this, in the majority of cases it is their ill-formed plans that are the cause of their undoing. Of

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course, almost all the cases written up in books are ones in which the criminals have been caught. But there must be many crimes still undiscovered and many murderers still at large. The perfect crime really must exist.

If I killed Kasaoka, I wouldn't try to hide his corpse. A lot of criminals have slipped up here. How foolish—all that matters is that no one knows who committed the crime.

I read a few detective novels, but they weren't of any practical use. The common denominator of such fiction is the intricacy of the tricks. They are fine for fiction, although some of them are just unbelievable, so far-fetched and labored one would have to be a magician to pull them off.

What did prove useful was the alibis. I decided a foolproof alibi was the only way to avoid being caught. Yet creating an alibi involves all sorts of chicanery. In order to account for an absence of, say, a brief twenty to thirty minutes—or, at the longest, one or two hours—one had to act like a conjurer, manipulating time, changing appearances as speedily as an actor, or employing sound-making devices such as record players.

It was all very interesting but completely impractical. Such a short time span was a mistake. I had to come up with an alibi that would cover a much longer period. My decision to choose this kind of alibi was unshakeable.

Then I decided that I had to remove myself as far as possible from suspicion. No matter how cleverly I acted, if I were included among the suspects the danger factor would be that much greater. The advanced investigation and interrogation techniques of today's authorities might ultimately be my downfall. It was imperative for me to remain in a safety zone where no suspicion would cast its shadow.

When someone is murdered, the police carefully go through all his personal relationships in search of suspects. The victim's family ties, his friends, his acquaintances, both professional and private, all fall within this sphere. Once a motive is found, the suspect's actions are examined with a minuteness far surpassing his own memory. In the end, there is no escape.

I decided to place myself beyond this sphere. In other words, I would cut off all ties with Kasaoka. If I killed him now, as a colleague I would come under scrutiny, and this was dangerous.

After much thought, I finally devised a plan. In order to sever ties with him, I would quit the bank. The only link between us was our place of work, so just by quitting I'd become completely removed

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from his life. But it wouldn't suffice just to leave the bank, I would have to move out of Tokyo. The farther away I was from him, the less chance there was of being a suspect. It would also help to choose a new career that had nothing to do with banking.

All this would take a tremendous amount of time. As long as people remembered me, the danger factor was always present. It would be a long while before my name—Tadao Kuroi—was thoroughly erased from everyone's memory. It was absolutely necessary that I vanish in such a way that after Kasaoka's murder no one would recall my existence. Only by fulfilling this condition would I be able to place myself completely beyond the sphere of the investigation.

I fixed this period at three years, then decided that was too risky. Even with five years I felt uneasy. In the end I decided on seven years. By that time, I would have utterly removed myself from Kasaoka's surroundings. How impetuous and restricted was the artifice of a one- or two-hour alibi. That was why it invited failure. Seven years might seem extremely long and tedious, but considering that failure would probably mean the death sentence waiting that amount of time was nothing at all. I saw it simply as an enormous blank chunk of time. When something is too big, the conscious mind cannot grasp it.

There was one more essential condition. The motive had to remain secret—that was imperative. Luckily, there was no one who connected Kasaoka with Mitsuko's death. I hadn't told anyone, so Kasaoka and I were the only ones who knew. Kasaoka had begged me not to make it public. I would go along with his wishes. As long as it remained our secret, no one else would be able to figure out a motive.

After I had worked out my plan, I made Kasaoka a formal proposition.

"There's no point in being angry with you now. My sister loved you, so I've decided to reconcile myself to it. But for my sister's sake, I don't want you ever to tell anyone."

Kasaoka's eyes were moist with tears of gratitude.

"Really? Thank you, thank you. I deserved a thrashing from you. Thank you for your forgiveness. Of course I'll keep it a secret to the day I die."

He was the type who could say this without blushing, and so my hatred of him increased all the more. It seemed easy to be able to wait out seven years.

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Kasaoka, overjoyed, became friendlier toward me. I responded as best I could. Until I quit, it wouldn't do to give the impression that we were on bad terms.

One month later, with a made-up excuse, I resigned from the bank.

Through a business connection, I got a job in a cement company in a town called Ube in Yamaguchi Prefecture. It was a small coastal town at the far end of Honshu. As the job had nothing to do with banking, it was ideal.

At my farewell party, Kasaoka made the biggest scene. He shook my hand repeatedly and told me how much he hated to see me go. He had always been partial to alcohol, and led the others in a toast to my new career. He looked extremely happy, carrying on like this. My presence had made him uneasy, after all. As I gazed at him, I guessed as much.

He saw me off at Tokyo Station along with the rest of my colleagues. He shouted *"Banzai!"* as he waved over and over again. Who was he really cheering for? No one could have guessed the true nature of our relationship.

As the lights around Shinagawa flowed past me, I bid a temporary farewell to Tokyo. Of my own volition, I was banishing myself to a distant place.

I hadn't left Tokyo, however, without taking some necessary measures. In my section at the bank there was a young man named Shigemura who had started as an office boy. I had shown special kindness to him from a long time back, so he liked me.

"Shigemura, you know I've worked here for quite a while, so even though I'm leaving the bank I still feel close to the place. I want you to keep me posted on everyone's movements. Could you write to me if there are any changes?"

Shigemura agreed. In fact, he carried this out faithfully over the long years. When there were any changes in personnel, he sent me the company bulletin.

I was worried that I would lose track of Kasaoka. What would be the use if I couldn't find him seven years later? Even from far away it was necessary to maintain a constant watch over him. Through Shigemura's reports I was able to keep track of him without leaving home. To carry this off for seven years, I had to send Shigemura frequent gifts as tokens of my goodwill.

In this manner, I kept a low profile in the countryside for two years. Whenever I felt an urge to return to Tokyo, I suppressed it.

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In time I adjusted to life in the country, but my resolution remained unchanged. Occasionally someone would suggest I get married, but I never considered it. I was afraid that a change in circumstances would weaken my determination.

Three years passed, then four. Kasaoka became assistant director of the bank's Kichijoji branch, then was transferred to the branch in Meguro. Shigemura's reports kept arriving regularly. In the fifth year, Kasaoka became assistant director of the Shibuya branch.

There were two years left to go. Patiently I waited. My resolution hadn't wavered in the least. An outsider might have found me paranoid. My intense hatred of Kasaoka burned, unseen by any. The obvious motive of revenge for my sister now seemed almost minor.

There were some slight changes in my own circumstances. I was promoted to chief clerk in my company. I had also found a girl I liked, but I had made no promises of marriage. Ube was a "cement town," where white ash would come blowing over the rooftops. Beyond the houses, which looked as if they had been dusted by a fine snow, the blue sea spread out gently. On clear days you could see the mountains in Kyushu. Yet even this tranquil scenery could not weaken my resolution.

In the sixth year, Kasaoka was promoted manager of the Omori branch. One more year left. Six years was a long time, after all.

I had removed myself completely from Kasaoka's surroundings. No matter how his circle was widened, there was no way the name Tadao Kuroi would surface. I had cut off all ties with him, both temporal and spatial. Whatever mishap might befall Kasaoka, there was no longer anyone who would recall my existence. I had vanished from the scene without leaving a trace.

Toward the end of the sixth year, Kasaoka was transferred to the Nakano branch. And to make things more convenient, Shigemura had become a teller there. Shigemura's letter contained the following information: "Mr. Kasaoka, now branch manager, has become an even heavier drinker. Almost every night he makes the rounds of the bars behind Shinjuku's Niko Building."

For me, this was an invaluable tip on the movements of the enemy.

At last the seventh year came. Time had passed slowly, and the seven years weighed heavily on me. Time had taken on an almost physical presence. In my own way, I was happy that my resolution had remained steadfast over the years.

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Around April, I put in a request at work for a two-week vacation. Two weeks might not be necessary, but I was calculating the time it could take to find Kasaoka. Once we met, the deed would be accomplished within an hour. And as soon as it was over I intended to leave Tokyo. This was the plan I had perfected seven years earlier when I had quit my job at the bank.

I had already gotten hold of the cyanide. It had been easy to obtain it through a connection at the factory. It was the best method, I decided—quick and effective.

I tucked it away in my pocket, and eagerly headed for Tokyo.

When I got off at Tokyo Station, I was surprised by the changes that had taken place in seven years. There were any number of tall buildings that hadn't been there before. It was a great city after all. My long absence had made me nostalgic, and yet I realized that at the same time I was no longer in touch with anything. I had been worn down by seven years of country life. My face reflected in the shop windows had aged. I had wasted the latter half of my youth. Still, I had no regrets, for at the end of my exile lay my long-desired goal—Kasaoka.

I thoroughly familiarized myself with the timetables for trains leaving Tokyo Station. As soon as I arrived, I had to make my plans for escape.

In the evening I took a room in a small inn in Kanda, close to both Shinjuku and Tokyo Station. It was an inconspicuous place.

That evening I roamed the Kabuki-cho night-life area behind Shinjuku's Niko Building. I walked from ten until nearly midnight. This was the time when I was most likely to encounter the carousing Kasaoka. In fact, there were many people of his type walking about. It really didn't matter who might see me, for I was a mere traveler in the crowd and there was no one who would know me. Who could say where I had wandered in from? Tadao Kuroi, a securities clerk at the Tokyo main office of M. Bank seven years ago, no longer existed.

That evening I didn't find Kasaoka. It would have been too much of a windfall to have run into him on the first night after my arrival. The next day I hardly set foot out of the inn during the daytime. One can't be too cautious. I was guarding against the faintest possibility of running into someone I knew.

However, one could say that this was an unnecessary precaution. Even if I did run into an old, neglected acquaintance, surely there'd

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be no one who'd link me to Kasaoka's murder. The threads connecting us had been completely severed. There was the distance of seven years and 1,050 kilometers. I no longer appeared anywhere in Kasaoka's surroundings. I was simply being overly cautious by not going out in the daytime.

Again the next evening I prowled around Shinjuku, but in vain. This time I felt a bit apprehensive. Could he possibly be sick or away on a business trip? In that case, I'd be better off going home after a week. I could set out again another time. Compared to the strain of waiting seven years, this delay was nothing at all.

The following evening I realized that I had been worrying needlessly. At 10:27 I clearly made out Kasaoka leaving a bar in the street behind the Niko Building.

When I spotted him I didn't get especially excited. Perhaps the impact was so great that, conversely, I was struck by a wave of calmness.

He was walking a bit unsteadily.

I tapped him on the shoulder, acting as if no time had passed—though his baldness had spread as far as the back of his head. "Mr. Kasaoka, it's been ages," I said calmly. Then, for the first time, emotion came welling up inside me. Kasaoka didn't seem able to recall me easily. He was probably struggling to figure out which of his clients this smiling face in front of him belonged to. But that didn't last long. A look of surprise appeared on his face—then, in the characteristic manner of drunks, he flung out both arms wildly and shook me heartily by the shoulders.

"Hey, it's Kuroi, right?" His bulging eyes were proof that his shock hadn't worn off yet. "Hey!" he repeated. He seemed uncertain what to say next.

"It's been a long time," I told him. "I'm glad to see you're well."

I had to suppress my surging emotions and, holding my smile, I tried to calm him down. We were in the middle of the street. People weaved around us in droves. None of the pedestrians paid us any special attention.

"When did you come here?" Kasaoka asked. He must also have been overcome by complex emotions, but he was keeping them hidden.

"I just got here. I haven't been back for a while. Tokyo is getting more and more prosperous," I answered.

At last he regained his normal drunken expression. "Tokyo's gone downhill—too many people and too many cars." In seven years his

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physical appearance had gotten more imposing, and his manner of speaking had taken on an air of importance befitting a bank-branch manager.

"Oh, I hear you've been made branch manager—my congratulations." I said it without thinking, meaning to flatter him.

Kasaoka looked at me. "Who told you that?" he asked. I was taken aback.

"I just heard it somewhere. How nice for you," I added quickly. Since he was being complimented, Kasaoka didn't dwell on the matter. His mood improved greatly.

"Let's have a drink somewhere and catch up on things," he said.

I breathed a sigh of relief. From now on I'd have to watch what I said. I chastised myself for being careless.

I had been waiting for Kasaoka to invite me out for a drink. This was the very chance I had been hoping for. Everything was going as planned.

"How many years has it been?" Kasaoka asked cheerfully as we walked. He seemed to have lost all sense of time.

"Seven years."

"Seven years? That long, eh?"

Those inadvertent words made my hatred for him flare up. He obviously couldn't understand the substance and weight of seven years. I had quit the bank and exiled myself to the distant countryside because of this man. Half of my youth had been ruined. As I glanced at his broad shoulders, I knew the time had come to have him taste my revenge.

"Oh, Mr. Kasaoka," I said casually. "When we get to the bar, let's not talk of our meeting after seven years. I'm still not quite over my memories from then."

That seemed to get through to him.

"Fine with me," he agreed. "Let's just drink together like normal."

The first bar we entered was large and full of customers. The conditions were good. The more crowded the better.

Kasaoka seemed to be a regular there and waitresses who passed us cast him smiling glances.

"Is your job interesting?" he asked.

"Not especially, but I like the easy pace in the country."

"That's what matters. Wearing out your nerves every day like I do is for the birds."

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He said this a bit boastfully. As he poured the beer, he kept urging me to drink. He was drunk and I pretended to be drunk, too.

It was strange to have the man I had kept track of from the western tip of Honshu all these years sitting in front of me. It was so bizarre it might have been an illusion. At moments I couldn't help thinking that he was unreal.

Suddenly he started to sing. He was singing so softly and slowly that I couldn't make it out at first, but when he raised his voice I found myself staring at him. The song was "Riru's Back from Shanghai."

So he, too, must have had to listen to Mitsuko singing the song ad infinitum. Or perhaps she had taught it to him. And it was likely that seeing her brother had brought it all back. His face bright-red, he continued singing it sluggishly, taking big gasps of breath. I felt a little sad, perhaps because I was a bit drunk, and at some point I also started to sing in time to his beat.

" 'Riru, Riru, where are you, Riru?—does anyone know where Riru is?' "

As I sang, I could almost hear Mitsuko's voice and my own scolding of her to be quiet. Tears flowed down my cheeks.

"It's a nice song, isn't it?" Kasaoka seemed lost in the past. "The song had just gotten popular at the time. It all comes back, doesn't it?"

A young waitress walking by at that moment glanced at Kasaoka and then turned her gaze on me. It was only for an instant, but I was sure that she heard what Kasaoka said. The proof was that she also began singing, "Riru, Riru" as she walked. I felt sick. It was a dark moment, like passing through a tunnel.

I had to make a move quickly. Kasaoka was leaning on the table, his eyes closed, on the verge of falling asleep. His glass was still half full of beer.

The place was bustling with people, none of whom were looking our way.

I took out a paper packet from my pocket and opened it. The small pile of white powder resembled crushed aspirin. I folded the paper in half with my fingertips, took Kasaoka's glass, and tipped the paper up while hiding the glass under the table. The white powder slipped down pleasingly and dissolved in the yellow brew. My heartbeat remained steady as I returned the glass to the table and quickly filled it with beer. The cloudy mixture disappeared inside the foam.

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"Mr. Kasaoka," I called out. I tapped his shoulder. He lifted his head and half opened his bloodshot eyes.

"Let's make a toast."

I poured beer into my own glass and raised it high. He made a kind of grunt as he reached for the glass in front of him. After lifting it to his lips, his mouth puckered a bit. I held my breath, but there was nothing to worry about. He gulped it all down. His obligation evidently fulfilled, he once more let his head droop onto the table. In about one minute he would start writhing. I put on my shoes and went outside, as if to get some air.

Once out, I made off, taking big strides. In four or five minutes he would breathe his last. The crucial act had been carried out as if it were nothing at all. It was all too ridiculous. People were laughing and talking as they walked, just like before—indifferent and unconcerned. Once more I had become an anonymous visitor to Tokyo.

According to my watch, it was three minutes past eleven. I remembered that there was a train leaving for Osaka at 11:35. I had just enough time to return to the inn and get ready. I hailed a cruising taxi, and as I got inside I called out, "Kanda" briskly.

The cab picked up speed as it pulled away from "the scene of the crime." By now Kasaoka would have left this world. The seven years of emotion felt too light—a sense of fulfillment was missing. As I took in the breeze from the window, it vaguely occurred to me that it would probably be a while before the reality sank in.

Dear Mr. ———

I sense that time is approaching for me to fill in the blank with a name. I still can't quite come to a decision. I have to write a bit more.

On the night train back, I considered whether I had made any slipups. I went over everything minutely, but I couldn't find any mistakes. Although I was more or less satisfied, I felt that a tiny crack had been left somewhere. This crack in its small way stubbornly marred my complacency and made me feel uneasy.

The sea on my left was devoid of lights. As I gazed at the pitch-black scenery, I suddenly figured out where the crack was—the eyes of the waitress when we were drinking! The dark foreboding I had felt then was still dogging me. I shook my head. Don't worry. You're getting all worked up over nothing. There's no reason to feel uneasy. Calm down, calm down.

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I was in a zone of absolute safety, completely removed from Kasaoka's surroundings. No matter how the authorities looked into his personal relations, there was no way I'd appear in their investigation. How could they dig up someone who had left his place of work seven years ago? The employees who'd be asked to give statements wouldn't even recall the first letter of my name. Since no robbery was involved, the authorities would investigate all his illicit relationships and personal enemies. But no one knew of me. I had been wiped off everyone's memory.

My face had been seen at the bar, but that was nothing to worry about. It was crowded, and who'd pay attention to a new customer? Even if the witness could recall my features, I was just a visitor to Tokyo. There was no way the authorities could locate me from her description. I was someone who no longer existed in anyone's memory. It had taken many years and meticulous planning to obtain this sense of immunity. The sacrifice had involved much pain and perseverance.

A letter came from Shigemura informing me that Kasaoka had been poisoned by cyanide, but the motive for the murder remained unknown. I felt relieved.

However, today, three weeks later, I found out that a detective has been making inquiries about me at the general-affairs section. He has been asking persistent questions about my one-week vacation. When I heard this from a friend in the section, I instantly came up against the eyes of the bar waitress.

The premonition I had had was about to become reality. I suddenly understood it all.

It was when Kasaoka and I had been singing "Riru's Back from Shanghai." Afterward he had said emotionally, "The song had just gotten popular at the time. It all comes back, doesn't it?" The waitress had heard this. Then she had turned to look at me. I had also been singing "Riru." She would have told the police that. Kasaoka had been a regular there, and waitresses tend to notice customers their regulars bring with them.

The investigators must have concluded that the murderer and victim had known each other when "Riru" had gotten popular—seven years ago. The net would be tightened. When they got that far, the rest would fall into place. It would be easy to match up the waitress's description of Kasaoka's companion with one of the employees at M. Bank at that time.

Both my careful plans and the seven years of perseverance col-

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lapsed in an instant. I laughed aloud. Mitsuko's "Riru" had been my downfall. What an annoying song it truly was, after all!

I'm too tired to write any more. But I want to say that even though I am defeated I have no regrets. Any moment now the detective will probably come knocking on my door. Undoubtedly, he'll have a warrant for my arrest in his pocket.

Should I address this to the head of investigations or to a lawyer? Or should I turn this into a will made out to no one? With only a short time left, I still can't decide.

—translated by Adam Kabat

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

JUDGMENT NIL

by AVA MILLS

He bragged to his honey
That he would steal money
From a safe in a coin dealer's shop.
If he had been wise,
He'd have quickly realized
That his honey was really a cop.

Breaking into the shop at night,
He opened the safe all right—
Took every coin, every bill,
But then he got caught
By the girl he had thought
Would like what he did for a thrill.

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GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Prosessing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Start Immediately! Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DCM, Burnt Hills, NY 12027-9983.

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$50.00, $100.00, $1,000.00 Weekly! Mailing Letters. Send Six 25¢ Stamps. Bloom, Box 5938, Richardson, Texas 75083.

HOMEWORKERS NEEDED! TOP PAY! These words can mean FRAUD! Profitable homework is possible, but don't get taken! FREE REPORT! Send long SASE to: Consumer Network, Dept.-4, Box 8135, St. Paul, MN 55108.

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BEAUTIFUL GIRLS SEEK FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE. American—Mexican—Philippine—European. Photo selection FREE! Latins, Box 1716-DD,Chula Vista, CA 92012.

HIGH SCHOOL AT HOME, diploma awarded. Low tuition. Our 92nd year. Phone free anytime. 1-800-228-5600, or write American School, Dept. #388, 850 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH SPEAKING Filipinas want men of all ages as Life Partners. Videos available: PAL, 51 Blanca, CO 81123-0051. 1-900-860-3033. $3.00/per minute. Adults.

MEET Beautiful Women! We supply photos, names, addresses! Send for Free Details! Merit, Box 74758-AE, Los Angeles, CA 90004.

ASIAN WOMEN desire friendship, marriage! Free details, photos! SUNSHINE INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, Box 5500-HF, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 96745. (808) 325-7707.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

BEAUTIFUL BRITISH LADIES & ELIGIBLE GENTLEMEN seek American ladies & gentlemen for Friendship/Romance/Marriage! Free details: English Rose Agency, 2nd Floor, Mill Lane House, Mill Lane, Margate, Kent, England. Tel: 01144-843-290735.

RECIPES

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ELLERY QUEEN

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

Send to **ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**
Classified Advertising Department Suite 1401
380 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

15 WORD MINIMUM
Only $48.00 for 15 Words or Less
$3.20 each additional word
Capitalized words add—40¢ per word
SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS SAME COPY ORDER

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the 5th day of the third preceding month for issue in which ad is to appear.

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME _____

FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____ **DATE:** _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

_____ Words at $3.20 each $ _____

_____ Capitalized word at 40¢ each _____
Total amount for 1 ad $ _____

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total $_____ x 3 – $ _____
(b) Multiply total amount on above line by x .85
(c) Total amount for 3 ads $ _____

(Example One 15 word ad $48.00 x 3 months $144 00 x 85 - $122.40)

$_____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) **$48.00**	(2) **$48.00**	(3) **$48.00**	(4) **$48.00**	(5) **$48.00**
(6) **$48.00**	(7) **$48.00**	(8) **$48.00**	(9) **$48.00**	(10) **$48.00**
(11) **$48.00**	(12) **$48.00**	(13) **$48.00**	(14) **$48.00**	(15) **$48.00**
(16) **$51.20**	(17) **$54.40**	(18) **$57.60**	(19) **$60.80**	(20) **$64.00**
(21) **$67.20**	(22) **$70.40**	(23) **$73.60**	(24) **$76.80**	(25) **$80.00**
(26) **$83.20**	(27) **$86.40**	(28) **$89.60**	(29) **$92.80**	(30) **$96.00**

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of Words in your ad Each initial or number counts as 1 word Mark Holly 380 Lexington Avenue New York New York 10017 7 WORDS Zip codes are not counted Phone # 2 Words Symbols used as keys are charged for City or State count as 1 word each Garden City New York 2 words Abbreviations such as C O D FOB PO U S A 7x10 35mm count as 1 word (PO Box 145 count as 3 words) Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling compound words hyphens abbreviations etc **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE.**

NEXT ISSUE...

10 stories—including 3 reprints

STANLEY ELLIN ("The House Party")

GEORGE BAXT (about an unreasonable facsimile)

JEAN DARLING ("I Never Saw His Face")

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Ben Snow)

H. F. HEARD ("The President of the U.S., Detective")

and Part 2 in EQMM's 50th Anniversary Contest!

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RUSSELL ATWOOD ..... *Managing Editor*
TERRI CZECZKO ..... *Art Director*
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Editor-in-Chief
(1941–1982)

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MAIL ★ ORDER ★ MALL

▼ CAR-THEFT PROTECTION — WITH NO INSTALLATION

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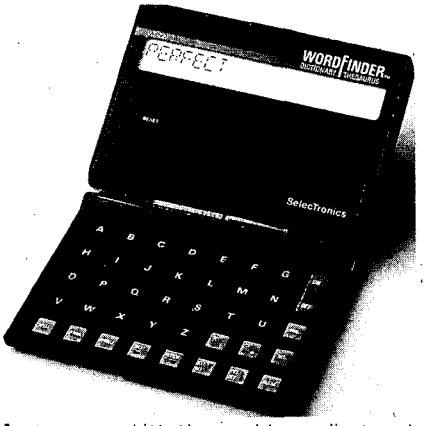

It's new and it's the worlds smallest and smartest electronic dictionary/thesaurus. Small enough to fit into your pocket. Definitions for more than 50,000 words, spelling for 100,000 words, thesaurus with more than 660,000 words. Also has 10 wild card letters to help with crossword puzzles and a flash card vocabulary builder. Perfect for students or anyone who would like to improve and expand their use of the English language. Batteries included **$115.98** ($5.00) #A1990.

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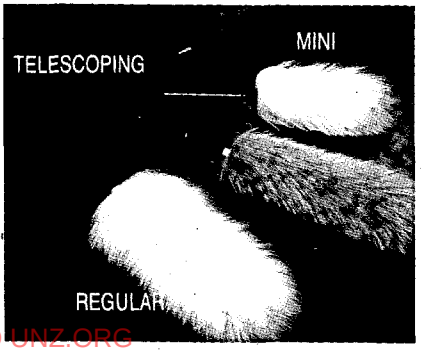

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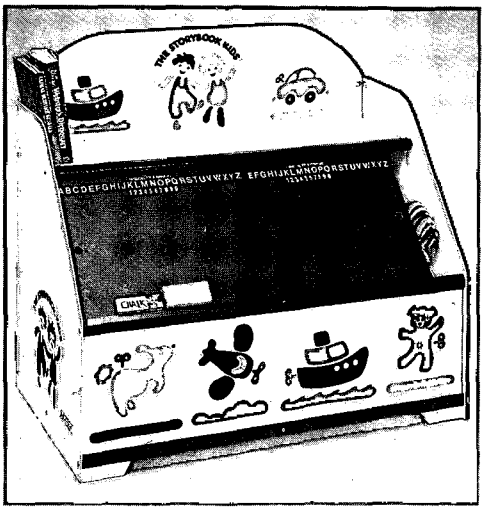
▼ THE FUN CENTER



If you hadn't seen this photograph, would you believe there could be a place to store a multitude of toys and games that also incorporates a bookshelf, plus serves as an art-and-play center — all in 18"x32" of floor space! 29" high, constructed of hard-board and wood with safe, smooth sanded edges and a non-toxic finish, the chest is decorated with storybook characters and has sliding chalkboard doors (chalk and eraser included). Illustrated instructions for assembly are provided; all parts predrilled and all screws included. A space-saver, a colorful accent for kids' rooms or family room, this is a creative inducement for children to keep their possessions in order. **$32.98** ($7.50) #A1877.

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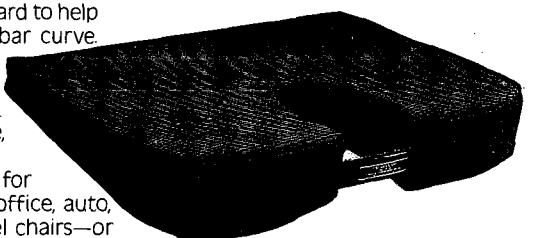
Are you one of the millions of Americans who suffers from low back pain? Do hours of prolonged sitting leave you aching or numb? If so, the revolutionary orthopedic "Tush Cush"™ is the seat of your dreams. This scientifically designed seat works to relieve and prevent back pain in 2 ways: first, it suspends the tailbone (coccyx) in the air and reduces the pressure on and within the lower spinal discs; second, the unique wedge shape tips the pelvis forward to help restore the spine's nature lumbar curve. Constructed of highly resilient polyurethane foam, the "Tush Cush"™ comes with a removable, machine washable, dark brown cover. It measures 14"x18" and features a handle for easy toting. Perfect for home, office, auto, sporting events, theatres, wheel chairs—or anywhere your "tush" needs a "cush"ion! **$39.98** ($5.00) #A1967.



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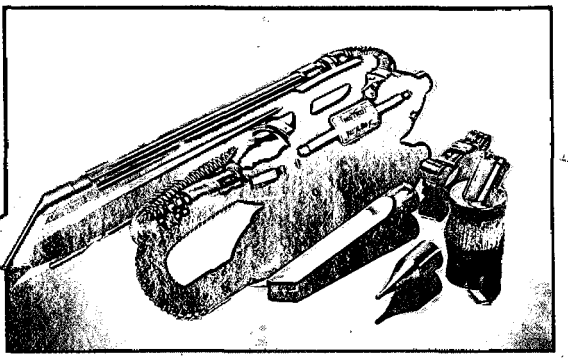
▶ VAC 'N' BLO JR.™



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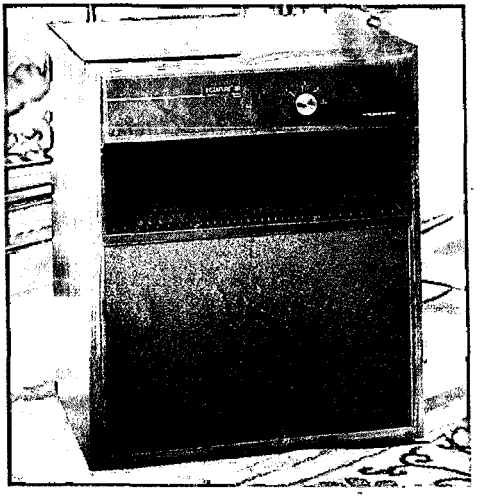

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